

## ROUND THE GALLEY FIRE.

### *A DANCE AT SEA.*

A LARGE Australian passenger ship, homeward bound from Sydney, New South Wales, lay becalmed in about two degrees south of the line. She had carried the trade-wind to that point, but it had failed her at day-break, and all day long she had hung upon the whitish-blue of the oil-smooth sea, slightly leaning with the swell that ran through the bosom of the deep with the regularity of a restful respiration, her white canvas softly beating against the yellow masts, which were radiant with lines of fire, and the water bubbling like a fountain under her counter, as the stern of the great fabric was depressed by the heave of the swell under the bows.

She was tolerably well crowded with human beings, carrying a large number of passengers in the cuddy and steerage, and some thirty or forty people in the 'tween decks. The poop was sheltered by an awning, and under it, seated on chairs or lounging upon the skylights and the hencoops, were such of the passengers as were privileged to use that portion of the decks, reading, talking, smoking, casting languid eyes upon the breathless ocean; ladies fanning themselves, gentlemen

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in the airiest possible costumes, and at the extremity of the shadowed deck the steersman grasping the wheel, his figure in the pouring vertical sunshine rising and falling against the rich sapphire of the tropical heavens with the swaying of the ship, and the brilliant brass of the binnacle-hood flashing into flames as it slowly lifted and sank under the eye of the burning luminary.

The quarter-deck was partially sheltered by the folds of the mainsail, which hung from the great yard in the grip of the leechlines; and there, wherever the shadows rested, congregated the steerage and 'tween-deck passengers, lolling red-faced and open-breasted. In one place a knot of women with children gathered about them, in another a number of men in their shirt-sleeves sprawling in many postures; and, forward, glimpses of Jack could be caught at work at some job in the waist, or on the forecastle, or in the shadow of the break of his big parlour, or popping his head through the scuttle with a sooty inverted pipe between his teeth to have a look around him, or enjoying a wash-down, stripped to the hips, in a bucket of salt water, screened from the passengers' eyes by the galley; while the live stock in the long boat filled the air that way with rumbling and squeaking noises, which harmonized with the hoarse pipes of the boatswain standing betwixt the knightheads and bawling instructions to a couple of ordinary seamen on the foretopsail-yard.

The day passed with never so much as a shadow upon the sea to give the officer on duty an excuse to sing out to the watch. But nobody could reasonably complain. The ship had rushed grandly into this stagnant <sup>calm</sup> ocean under topmast and topgallant studdingsails, and for days and days the roar of foam speeding furiously past and the thunder of the trade-wind sweeping into the spacious

concavities of the gleaming cloths had been familiar sounds. This calm was only like giving the ship a little breathing-time. Besides, it would directly serve a very pleasant purpose then in hand, which was simply this. It was the birthday of the daughter of one of the passengers, a rich Australian gentleman. The girl was pretty, charming in manners, and universally liked; indeed, four gentlemen were seriously in love with her, and one of these had suggested that they should celebrate the occasion by a dance. The skipper came promptly into the scheme, and so did the rich Australian papa, who merely stipulated that the dance should be general from one end of the ship to the other, and that he should be at the charge of enough wine to keep the heels of the fore-castle and 'tween-decks nimble and up to the mark. They could dance in a calm like this, and the light and regular swell would be rather a help than a hindrance, as the heave of the deck should put additional alacrity into the swing of a waltz or the stampede of a gallop round the hencoops and hatchways. They could muster a little music: a flute, a concertina, and two fiddles, and they also had the cuddy piano. So all that was needful for a sea-ball was at hand, and in the second dog-watch, before the sun went down, they began to prepare for the festivity. There would be a bright moon, and the question whether they should dance in its light, like the Buffalo girls, or keep the awning spread, had been earnestly debated at luncheon and dinner. It was decided, however, to let the awning stand—first, because it would slow up the dew from the deck; and, secondly, because the forewhitens would show to advantage in its shadow. At the appointed time, therefore, the sailors came in to rig up the lanterns, as many as they had, side-lights, cabin-lamps, and the like. Any departure from



regular routine delights Jack, and his grin is never broader nor his whispered jokes more explosive than at such times. Besides, he was to dance presently, and he tumbled through the preparations like a man in a hurry to enjoy himself. The sun went down—a mass of glorious splendour—flinging up the glass-smooth water until the western horizon all that way looked to be twenty leagues distant, and shedding a haze of purple gold far to the eastward of the zenith that tinted the mighty expanse of ocean with a delicate crimson which yielded fast to the eager stride of the tropical night, though darkness was in the east, and the large tremulous silver stars were sparkling upon its deep ebony bosom, and the white snow-like moon was floating in the pure deep shadows in the south and whitening the water with a slender stream of icy light, when the west was still ardent with the fires of the vanished day-beam.

The cool of the night was immediately felt in the air, and now the circling draughts thrown down upon the decks by every flap of the lower canvas could be felt and enjoyed. With the row of lanterns along the poop, here a red and there a green one, mingling with the yellow radiance of the other lamps, the lustrous pearl of the moonlight on the main deck and forecastle, and the drowsily-flapping sails lifting their pale heights to the stars, the ship was a picturesque object indeed. The musicians posted themselves against the rail at the break of the poop, so that all hands could hear their strains and dance to them; and everything being ready they dashed into a waltz, keeping very good time, and accompanied (after a fashion) by the piano in the cuddy, the notes of which rose very clearly through the oblique sky-lights. Aft, of course, there was the need for decorum, ladies and gentlemen gliding over the

planking and skimming along with great propriety, and with a more or less tolerable exhibition of art. But on the main deck and forecastle shore customs were not very strictly adhered to. Women danced with women, men with men; the children hopped to and fro, clapping their hands and getting in the way; here and there a sailor would be showing off his paces in a lonely dance, slapping the deck with his heels in a hornpipe without the least reference to the music, which, so long as it kept going, was all the same to him, no matter what dances it played. The steward and his mates bustled about with wine and glasses; but the wine was light, and Jack, and many of the steerage and 'tween-deck passengers too, no doubt, were seasoned, and the mild refreshment did no further mischief than impart a sense of festivity.

They say, and I can well believe, that a prettier sight was never seen than all those people dancing, and laughing, and enjoying themselves on the decks of that becalmed and sleeping Australian vessel. You must figure yourself taking your stand on one of the poop-ladders, say, clear of the awning, where, looking aft, you could see the row of lanterns and the dancers shifting their colours as they swept round into the rays of the green and red lamps, with little floods of moonlight here and there upon the deck under the awning; and beyond, the man at the wheel, standing there like a bronze figure, the binnacle lamp softly touching his shape with light, and making his image clear against the stars which slowly slid to and fro, past him; or where, looking forward, you commanded the vessel to the very eyes of her, whence the great bowsprit and long jibbooms forked into the gloom like a spear pointed by a giant, on which the row of jibs glimmered as they soared into the pale obscurity. On those decks the moonlight lay broad; but

in places shone a yellow light which, with the moonshine, threw twin-shadows upon the silvered planks, and the shadows of the rigging were sharp and black, and scored the sails as though they were ruled with lines of India ink. The crowd of big spare booms over the galley, the outline of the huge windlass barrel under the forecastle, the solid masts piercing the night and bearing on high their vast stretches of symmetrical canvas, from which an occasional shower of dew would fall when the sails came in to the masts, loomed large and vague in the moonlight; there was something of shadowiness, too, in the figures of the dancers as they swayed in crowds between the bulwarks, and frolicked on the forecastle, with frequent bursts of hearty laughter and loud calls, which were thrown back in light echoes from the lofty sails.

The musicians varied the dances often, but it was all one to the sailors and the steerage passengers, and whilst the cuddy people were staidly stalking through quadrilles or decorously gyrating in waltzes or hopping gravely through a mazurka, the company on the main deck kept steadily to galops and polkas—this last, a beloved dance among sailors—floundering against each other, capsizing over the children, spinning around the main hatch and through the galley, and awaking the echoes of the fore-castle with their active toeing and heeling.

But it was impossible to look abroad upon the vast and vague distances of the dark sea, upon whose horizon, down to the very water's edge, the stars were shining like fireflies, without a mingling of melancholy in the thoughts. How small a speck that ship made in the midst of the lonely leagues of ocean! how minute a theatre sufficed for the revelry of near upon two hundred human souls! The contrast between the sounds in a vessel and the deep silence upon the sea was defined to

degree such as no pen could give expression to! The silence was like the night itself, a near and impervious envelopment which absorbed the shouts and laughter of the dancers as a stone flung at a mound of snow vanishes in it. The water against the ship's side looked thick and black and sluggish as liquid pitch, but now and again the wash of the swell would set it on fire with phosphorous, that poured away under the surface in bright illuminated clouds, which sparkled and faded until they vanished utterly and the water was black again. Once an exclamation from the second mate, who was looking over the rail at the sea, brought several dancers to his side, and, following the indication of his outstretched finger, they perceived a fiery oval shape sneaking stealthily along towards the bows of the ship. "Only a shark, ladies, hoping that some of us may waltz ourselves overboard;" and, merrily laughing, the dancers drew away and fell to their prancings afresh.

But presently, and in the midst of all this gaiety, the stream of moonlight in the south-west sea—a reflection that had hung like a cone of solid silver without a breath to tarnish the exquisite polish of its surface—trembled, and the water on either hand of it took a deeper shadow. Overhead the sails were silent, and a faint air streamed athwart the poop under the awning. The skipper, a fine-looking, hearty seaman, swung himself abreast of the officer in charge, with his arm still clasping the waist of his partner, said something in a low voice, and whisked off again. The officer walked to the break of the poop, and his loud cry startled the dancers on the main deck for a moment.

"Trim sail, the watch! Lay aft some hands, and man the starboard main braces. Wheel, there; how's her head?"

"North-west by north, sir."

And now some new strains were added to those produced by the musicians. The rough voices of seamen rounding in the braces rose harshly, and the measures of the dance music were somewhat perplexed by the sharp cries of "Belay all that!" "Haul taut to wind'ard!" "Too much the royal yard. Slacken a bit to leeward!" But the dancers, to whose ears those cries were as familiar as their fingers were to their eyes, went on footing it bravely. The decks grew steady and slightly inclined; the sails had fallen asleep, and there was not a stir among the pallid folds; a pleasant sound of tinkling water came up from the ship's side, and under the counter a narrow wake of green fire crawled away, with little eddies of foam twinkling among the ghastly sparkles of the phosphorus.

But the musicians began to slacken; the piano had given over, and Jack had lighted his pipe forward, and was beginning to remember that his watch below would be up in two hours. By-and-by a bell was rung in the cuddy, and those who looked through the skylight saw that the grog and the biscuits were on the table. The music ended suddenly, and the fiddlers and the others gathered around the cuddy door, where they were received by the steward, who handed them each a glass of liquor. In twos and threes the steerage and 'tween-deck passengers went below, and in half an hour the ship's decks were deserted save by the steersman, the pacing officer of the watch, and some dark figures leaning over the head-rail, visible from the poop under the arched foot of the foresail. Up through the booby and main hatches would come fitfully the sound of a child crying, or a woman's voice talking low, or the growling hum of men; otherwise the silence was profound, the ship like

a phantom in the moonlight, and nothing audible ~~aleft~~ but the moan of the tropical night breeze in the rigging, with now and again the creak of a sheave as the light swing of the swell hove the great ship very gently to windward, and brought an extra strain upon the taut sheets.

## GOING ALOFT.

SOME time ago, when the Queen was at Osborne, her Majesty visited a troopship in her yacht the *Alberta*. Her Majesty's ship *Hector*, lying in Cowes Roads, manned yards in honour of the royal presence. One of the men got as high as the main truck and stood upon it. The main truck is a small circular platform—varying in diameter, of course, according to the size of the ship—fixed on the royal masthead, the highest point of the mast. Sometimes it has holes in it, through which halliards are rove for hoisting flags. The trucks of the *Hector*, I was told, are furnished with iron staffs, so that the sailor who stood on the main truck had something to lay hold of. But this diminishes nothing of the wonder of the feat. The nerve required coolly to stand upon a small circumference at a prodigious elevation is one thing; the more extraordinary feature of that achievement lies, it would strike a landsman, in the man's getting over and on to the truck, and then kneeling and swinging himself off it and down upon the royal rigging. In the fine old song of the "Leap for Life," the skipper's son gets upon the main truck and stands there, holding on with his eyelids. To save his life he is ordered to jump, and the dog follows him overboard and picks him up. The order to that boy was a sensible one, for though

it is perfectly true that he had managed to get upon the truck, it was really impossible that he should get off it without falling.

In truth, going aloft is one of the hardest parts of the sea-life at the first start. Seamen who were active, courageous men enough, have told me that it took them months to vanquish their nervousness; and many a young fellow has given up the sea after the first voyage simply because he never could overcome the purely physical infirmity of giddiness the moment he had his feet in the ratlines. In "Redburn," one of Herman Merivale's delightful sea tales, this weakness is illustrated in an incident narrated with wonderful power. A young man, named Harry Bolton, ships for the return voyage from Liverpool. He is rated as an ordinary seaman, but his friend notices that when any work has to be done aloft, Harry is always busy about the belaying pins, making fast the clewlines, etc. At last he candidly owns to his friend that he has made a private trial of it, and that he cannot go aloft; that his nerves would not allow of it. But this does not save him. One day the mate ordered him to mount to the main truck and unreeve the short signal halliards. Where the ends of the halliards came is not stated, but one might think that the royal yard would have been high enough for the unfortunate young man to have clambered, even if the crosstrees would not have done. Be this as it may, Harry Bolton hesitates, is rope's-ended by the mate, finally springs into the main-rigging and gets as high as the maintop. When there he looks down, and his heart instantly fails him. The pitiless mate thereupon orders a Dutch sailor to follow and help him up, which the Dutchman does with his head, butting at the base of his back and hoisting him along in that way. "Needs must,"



continues the narrator, "when the devil drives; and higher and higher, with Max bumping him at every step, went my unfortunate friend. At last he gained the royal yard, and the thin signal halliards—scarcely bigger than common twine—were flying in the wind. 'Unreeve,' cried the mate; I saw Harry's arm stretched out—his legs seemed shaking in the rigging, even to us down on deck; and at last, thank heaven! the deed was done. He came down pale as death, with bloodshot eyes and every limb quivering."

Sailors will know there is no exaggeration in all this. Some beginners will run up aloft like monkeys, others will get into the shrouds and stand there, hanging back and looking up, and holding on as if they meant, to use an old sea phrase, to squeeze all the tar out of the ropes. There is not, perhaps, any worse cruelty practised on board ship than that of driving a nervous lad aloft. In former times there was a custom called pricking—a sailor got behind a boy and forced him up by digging into him with a pin or a "pricker." It is, perhaps, scarcely worth while, nowadays, to speak of such things—the sailing ship is dying out, and the steamer gives but little work to do aloft; but there are few men who have followed the sea who cannot recall cases of exquisite suffering in nervous boys hurried and pricked and thrust up the rigging. One instance I remember—that of a lad of thirteen, who was shipped in an Australian port. He was ordered on to the foreroyal yard along with another youngster. It was his first journey up the masts, and when he was half-way up the shrouds he came to a dead stop. The boatswain sung out to him to look alive and go on. The poor little chap, with shaking hands and a face like the foam alongside, footed it as high as the futtock shrouds, where he halted, looking up

at the overhanging platform of the top. "Over you go," shouted the boatswain from the fore-castle. "I can't, sir; indeed I can't, sir!" cried the little fellow piteously. "We'll see about that," said the boatswain, and called to an ordinary seaman to help him up. This youth was a brute, and when he reached the clinging boy he began to pinch him in the legs, and pulled out his sheath-knife and threatened to stab him if he did not go over the top. It was a big top, the angle of the mast—the wind being abaft the beam—was a small one, and the futtock shrouds stretched away from the boy like the ribs of an open umbrella from the stick. The miserable little fellow, terrified by the sight of the knife behind him, laid hold of the long irons and made a swing with his legs at the ratlines, missed them, vibrated a moment or two like a pendulum, and then dropped past the outstretched hand of the sailor below him like a flash, striking the shrouds, and rebounding as a ball might overboard. He was drowned, of course.

But as steamers multiply and the number of sailing ships decreases, going aloft will become the least and most infrequent of sea duties. Practical seamanship, in the old sense, is bound to die out, because there is no need to preserve it. It was only the other day that an old skipper assured me that he was acquainted with the mate of a steamer who did not know what a harness-cask was, "and, worst of all, sir," cried my friend, "he's not ashamed of his ignorance." It is true that harness-casks have not much to do with seamanship; but one may excuse a shipmaster of the old school for taking a very gloomy view of the contemporary marine when he meets a man holding a master mariner's certificate, ignorant of the receptacle in which Jack's salt horse is kept when he is at sea. Most of the

steamers nowadays are monkey-rigged, many of them with pole-masts, which are useful mainly as derricks upon which a little bit of fore and aft canvas will be hoisted to steady the vessels. What should men who serve in such ships know about going aloft? Even a landsman may comprehend the emotion excited in a seaman who has passed his life in sailing ships when he sees sailors without any spars, or rigging to attend to, and with nothing to do but to wash decks down. Nearly all the work of the traditional mariner lies aloft, and to reflect upon Jack without dead-eyes to turn in, chafing gear to look after, reef-points to knot, rigging to tar, masts to stay, studdingsail gear to reeve, and the like, is almost as confounding as to think of him sleeping aft, eating fresh meat throughout the run, and going to the steward for a can of filtered water, instead of to the capstan for his eight bells caulker of fiery black rum. No doubt things are pleasanter as they are. It must be nice to turn in with the certainty of having the whole of your watch below, instead of going to bed in your sea-boots in readiness for the thundering of a handspike, and the cruel roar of "All hands shorten sail!" And yet, to the true sailor, going aloft is so much the part of his life, it is so complete a condition of his vocation, that when such a man finds himself aboard a steamer with nothing to take notice of above his head, it may be supposed that at the first going off he is as fully bewildered as a steamer's man—that is, a man who has never served in anything but steamers—would be among the ropes of a full-rigged ship, taken aback with her studding sails abroad. He will miss the old songs at the reef tackles, the flapping of canvas, the thud of coils of halliards and clew-lines flung down on deck, the springing into the shrouds, the helter-skelter for the

weather earing, or the ascent of the topgallant mast that jumps to the flogging of the clewed-up sails.

There is a touch of wild excitement in going aloft in heavy weather, which no seaman can be insensible to; just as in a calm day or night a man may find a strange pleasure in lingering a few moments aloft after he has done his work, and looking down. The labour of reefing has been greatly diminished by the double topsail yards, which halve the great sails, so that when the halliards of the upper yards are let go, the ship is under close-reefed topsails. Moreover, there is only half the weight of the sail to handle in reefing or stowing. This valuable contrivance makes the task of shortening sail light in comparison with what the labour was in the days of the whole topsail. Old seamen will remember what that kind of canvas involved in a ship of fourteen or fifteen hundred tons, manned by about eighteen or twenty men, capable of doing sailors' work aloft.

It is the second dog watch. The royals and mizzen-topgallant sail have been furled, but the wind comes in freshening puffs, the sky has a menacing look away out on the starboard beam, and at eight bells all hands are kept on deck to roll up the mainsail and topgallant sails, and tie a single reef in the fore and mizzen topsails. The sea washes noisily against the weather bow, and the night settles down as black as a pocket; but the ship is tolerably snug, there is no great weight of wind as yet, and the watch below are dismissed to the forecabin. They have been an hour in their hammocks or bunks, when, on a sudden, the scuttle is rudely flung open, and a loud cry summons them on deck. They are up in a moment, scarcely waiting to pull on their jackets, for the instant they are awake they perceive that the vessel is on her beam ends, and they can hear the thunder of

a gale of wind, raging overhead. All three topsail halliards have been let go, and the watch are yelling out at the reef-tackles, the skipper shouting at the mizzen-rigging, the chief mate bawling from the break of the poop, and the second mate and boatswain roaring in the waist and on the forecastle. The sea is flying heavily over the weather rail of the prostrate ship, and adding its peculiar bursting noise to the din of the furiously-shaken canvas, to the deafening booming of the wind, and the hoarse long-drawn cries of the sailors hauling upon the ropes. You can barely see the weather shrouds, though to leeward their black lines are plain enough against the washing heights of foam which swell up as high as the rail of the bulwarks. You do not feel the force of the gale until you are in the rigging, and then for a spell the iron-hard pressure of it pins you against the shrouds as if you had been made a spread-eagle. The rain drives along in slashing horizontal lines, and you see the sparkle of the deluge over the skylight where the light of the cabin lamp is shining; or, maybe, the gale is charged with sleet and hail, and the cold so tautens your fingers that you can scarcely curl them to the shape of the rope you grasp. Over the top you swarm in company with the rest of your watch, perhaps getting a blow on the head from the heel of some fellow above you as you lay yourself backwards to swing over the futtock shrouds; and then, finding the weather side of the topsail yard with as many hands on it as are needed, you pass over to leeward, where you find the boatswain or third mate astride of the yard-arm, ready for the cry of "Haul out to leeward," to pass the earing. At such a time as this a man has too much to do to look about him; the ship is brought close to shake the sail, that the men may get the reef-bands against the

## GOING ALOFT.

yard, otherwise the canvas stands out to the force of the gale in a surface as round as St. Paul's dome, and so hard and tense that it would serve as a platform for a ball-room.

In the whole-topsail days I have seen half a dozen men standing upon the canvas in the slings and quarters trying to stamp the sail down to bring the reef-points within reach without so much as dinting the wind-swollen convexity. Still it is possible to knot a reef-point, and take a look round and below. It is a wonderful scene; no landsman can conceive of its wild and awful majesty. The ship surges heavily through the black heavings, and with every headlong plunge fills a wide circumference of the far-down ebony waters with a furious swirling of foam, in the midst of which her long narrow shape is distinctly visible. Overhead is a dim vision of naked spars and yards, reeling in the boisterous void in-whose gloom it is just possible to trace the outline of huge black clouds rushing past like folds of swiftly-carried smoke. The yard on which you stand is at an angle of thirty or thirty-five degrees, and every lean-down of the slender fabric that supports the immense superstructure of masts threatens to submerge the point of it, astride of which—riding it as a horse—sits the seaman who takes the lee-earring; and his figure and that of the fellow beneath swinging on the flemish-horse, and those of the row of men who overhang the yard, and who chorus with a kind of shriek that rings athwart the yelling of the gale to the cry from the weather yard-arm of "Light over to windward!" are marked like pen-and-ink drawings upon white paper against the snow of the seas which stretch from the ship's side into the darkness.

But this is only one aspect of "going aloft." Another

—if the bowsprit and jibbooms may be included under the head of the word “aloft”—is that of laying out to furl, let me say the outer jib, when it has come on to blow hard enough to make the stowing of that sail necessary. From the masthead you see the ship under you; you can watch her hull flying through the sea, mark the glorious white of the foam that bursts from her bows and races in a broad band astern, and behold the ship in her noble solitude amid the tenantless world of waters whose pale green skirts lean against the hazy azure of the remote heavens. But on the jibboom you have the ship rushing at you, as it were; her cutwater seems to bear right down upon you; you see her coppered forefoot gleaming with a greenish tinge through the glass-clear water whose surface it divides into two feather-shaped fountains, whose seething and hissing and prismatic summits arch away from the glossy bends. And now, as she dips with a glorious rush into the hollow over whose yawning gloom you are poised as you overhang the jibboom, the half-buried bows break the sea into smoke, and yeast, and snow; the white and hissing mass, splendid with sunshine or rendered more vivid yet by the dark green of the seas along which it is sent rolling, roars and runs ahead of the ship as far as the flying jibboom, where its impetus fails and the soaring vessel swings over it, rising almost noiselessly over the thick froth, and in a breath it is passed, whilst you look down along the sloping deck from the forked-up boom and mark how like a creature of instinct the noble ship seems to be gathering herself together for the next headlong jump, her copper shining to windward, her black sides lustrous as a curried hide with the whirling spray, her leaning masts full of thunder on high, the white sails hard and still as carven marble, no sound

reaching you but the regular wash of the spurned and trampled waters under the bows, the rude and clear moaning of the wind in the rigging, and the complaining of massive timbers as the stem of the ship lengthens in a steady upheaval, and then crushes down until the torn and sobbing billows of foam are flashing their white feathers over the head-boards. Or jump aloft to loose, let us say, the mizzen royal after the tropical squall has gone away to leeward, and left the clear moon shining in a purified heaven of indigo, and striking a cone of silver glory in the dark sea whose northern waters are studded with flakes of light from the great stars. It is the middle watch; you have overhauled your clewlines, the yard has been hoisted over your head, you come down the topgallant rigging into the crosstrees, and linger there a few moments. All is silent on deck; the helmsman stands motionless at the wheel; you hear the faint jar of the tiller chains; you mark the delicate nimbus of light round the binnacle hood. Nowhere is the mystery wrought by the magical beams of the moon felt so much as at sea. The pearl-like radiance steepens the fabric of the ship in an atmosphere of soft light as illusive as the clouds of phosphorescent fires which break from her sides as she leans with the swell. The movements of the sails are like the flapping of phantom wings; and not a sigh of air, not a sound of chafing rope, not a voice calling suddenly from the distant deck, but seems to take from the moonlight and the measureless and impenetrable spaces of the deep, and the immense and enfolding silence of those far-off waters, a character of unreality that makes them seem the very phantasm and mockery of the things they veritably are.

A man might linger a long hour at the altitude of the crosstrees among the shadows of the moonlit, placid



ocean night without weariness. Better than the loftiest and loneliest cliff is the mast head of a ship for the surveyal of the sublime and mighty surface on which she floats, for you rock in unison with the breathings of the deep; you are upon her great heart, and every beat of it is marked by a stately motion of the towering masts against the stars; phosphoric outlines of huge fish haunt the sluggish wake; or a sound as of a long, deep-drawn respiration denotes the neighbourhood of a leviathan whose vast proportions, as they heave in the broad silver stream of moonlight, resemble the hull of a ship keel up, driven to the surface by some hidden power and slowly settling downwards again.

These are some of the excitements and some of the quiet pleasures of "going aloft." It is, no doubt, a highly sentimental view of the duty, and sailors who have had to let go the reef points, and beat their hands against the yards to drive life enough into their fingers to enable them to hold on, may consider that a very different representation of that kind of work would recommend itself a good deal more than this to their experience. Very possibly. But retrospection is apt to make us tender; and since "going aloft" must in the course of time—unless the shipbuilders change their minds—become a thing of the past, it is worth while spending a few minutes in trying to discover what there was of poetry and the picturesque in that old obligation of the marine life in the discharge of which the English sailor has always proved a shining example to all mariners. Even now—in these days when the steam-engine has so eaten into our maritime habits that a sailing-ship is looked upon as a kind of wonder of other times—do we not find Jack doing honour to his Queen by standing erect upon the main truck? But, oh! master mariners,

mates, boatswains, and able seamen, all you who have youngsters under your charge or among you as ship-mates, have mercy upon the timid lad, give him time to feel his way aloft, show him the lubber's hole, and remember that many a first-rate sailor has faltered at the outset, and gazed with horror and despair at those giddy heights whose summits seemed to his boyish gaze to pierce the sky.

## *A TRICK AT THE WHEEL.*

I REMEMBER a seaman, who had served for years both in sailing and steamships, telling me that never in all his life did he remember the like of the impression produced upon him one night when he was at the helm of a large ocean passenger steamer. He described the darkness; the occasional scattering of red sparks blown low down upon the sea on the lee beam; the glimmer of white water here and there out in the windy gloom; the silence aboard the vessel, disturbed only by the muffled beating of the engines and the scolding of water washing in snow from under the bows; and he told me how all these things, combined with the thought that under his feet there lay sleeping a whole crowd of men and women, made him feel as though he and the ship and the great wind-swept shadow through which she was speeding, were portions of a phantom world, and that nothing was real and sentient but the compass, whose illuminated card stood out upon the gloom like a composant at a ship's yard-arm.

I can conceive of many a strange, fanciful thought coming into a sailor's mind as he stands grasping the wheel in the lonely night watch, and I say this with a plentiful knowledge of the seaman's prosaic and unsentimental character. A man must be but a very short way removed from a four-footed animal not to feel at times

the wonderful and subduing spell which the ocean will fling over the human soul; and being at the wheel will give him the best chance of yielding to the nameless witchery, for at such a time—in most cases—he is alone; no one accosts him, the gloom falls down and blots out the figure of the officer of the watch, and completes the deep sense of solitude that is to be got from a spell at the helm on a dark and quiet night at sea. I cannot but think that the spirit of the deep is brought, at such a time, nearer to you aboard a sailing than aboard a steamship. The onward-rushing fabric that is impelled by engines demands incessant vigilance; she may be off her course even in the time that a man takes to lift his eyes to mark a flying meteor; there are no moments of rest. But in a sailing-ship you have the moonlit night and burnished swell heaving up in lines of ebony out of the visionary horizon, where the stars are wanly winking, until it rolls in billows of sparkling quicksilver under the wake of the bland and beautiful luminary; there is not a breath of air aloft, though little creepings of wind circle softly about the decks as the pallid surfaces of canvas swing in and out with the leaning of the ship; the moonlight lies in pools of light upon the planks, and every shadow cast upon those pearl-like surfaces is as black and sharp and clear as a tracing in ink; the after portions of the sails are dark as bronze, but looking at them forward they rise into the air like pieces of white satin, soaring into a stately edifice full of delicate hurrying shadows which resemble the streaky lustre on the inside of an oyster-shell as the cloths swell out or hollow in with the drowsy motion, and crowned with the little royals, which seem to melt even as the eye watches them like summer clouds upon the heaven of stars.

Moments of such repose as this you will get in a sailing-ship. Who that has stood at the wheel at such a time but remembers the soft patter of reef-points upon the canvas, the frosty twinkling of the dew upon the skylights and rail, the hollow sob of the swell under the counter as the ship heaves her stern, and the tiller-chains rattle, and the wheel jumps to the echo of the groan of the rudder-head? It is the middle watch; eight bells were struck a quarter of an hour since; the watch on deck are forward, coiled away anywhere, and nothing stirs on the forecastle; the officer on duty walks the starboard side of the deck, for the yards are braced to port, and that makes a weather deck where the mate is pacing, sleepily scratching the back of his head, and casting drowsy glances aloft and at the sea. The moon is low in the west, and has changed her silver into copper, and will be gone soon. The calm is wonderfully expressed by the reflection she drops; the mirrored radiance streams towards you like a river of pallid gold, narrow at the horizon and broadening, fan-shaped, until it seems within a biscuit's throw of the ship, where it vanishes in a fine haze; but on either hand of it the water is as black as ink, while the lustre of the moon has quenched the stars all about her, and left the sky in which she hangs as dark as the ocean.

The setting orb carries the mind with it. The eye will seek the light, and it is a kind of instinct that makes a man watch the sinking of the moon at sea, when there is a deep repose in the air and nothing to hinder his thoughts from following the downward-sailing orb. Many a time have I watched her, and thought of the old home she would be shining upon; the loved scenes she would be making beautiful with her holy light. There is nothing in life that gives one such a

sense of distance, of infinite remoteness, as the setting of the sun or moon at sea. It defines the immeasurable leagues of water which separate you from those you love with a sharpness that is scarcely felt at other times. It is the only mark upon the circle of the ocean, and courts you into a reckoning which there is something too vague in the bare and infinite horizon to invite. As one bell strikes the moon rests her lower limb upon the horizon, and her reflection shortens away from the ship's side as the red fragment of disc sinks behind the black water-line. In a few seconds nothing but a speck of light that glows like a live ember is visible; and when that is quenched the faint saffron tinge that hung about the sky when the moon was setting dies out and the whole circumference of the ocean is full of the blackness of night.

The ship makes but a ghostly shape. The stars are there, but a haze floats like a veil under them; the diamond-dust that glittered in the hollow caverns of the firmament is eclipsed, and the planets are rayless and sickly in their defined and blueish-coloured forms. A fold of deeper darkness seems to have swept along in the wake of the vanished moon, and the officer of the watch coming up to the binnacle takes a brief look at the card, and then goes to the quarter and stands there softly whistling, while the canvas aloft echoes with a louder note, and the rolling of the ship breaks the water under her counter into foam that seethes sharply and expires quickly. Black as the water is out on the starboard bow you notice a shadow upon it that gives a fresh shade, a further profundity, to the jetty obscurity, and in a few moments the sails aloft fall asleep as though the wand of a magician had been waved over the swaying spars and a soft air comes blowing over the rail.

"All aback forrards!" rings out a hoarse voice, and the cry finds an echo in the hollow canvas. The mate runs along the deck bawling out orders to flatten in the head-sheets and square the after yards, and so forth; the men come out of a dozen corners, coils of rigging are flung down, songs are raised, sheaves squeal as the yards are swung, topsail sheets rattle, and all is bustle and hurry. Meanwhile the wind freshens with a moan in the gathering gust, and the ship leans under it as her headsails fill, and she pays off. Presently the yards are braced round, the vessel brought to her course, and the wind is found to be a point free. The decks are still full of life, tacks have to be boarded, "small pulls" are wanted here and there, and the running gear has to be coiled away; the light from the binnacle lamp puzzles your eye, and when you lift your gaze from the illuminated card the darkness seems to stand around you like a wall; but the compass is there to tell you that the ship heads her course. You would know with your eyes blindfolded, by the mere feel of the helm, that everything is drawing, and amidst the calls of the mate and the songs of the sailors you can hear the sloppy sound of flat falls of water under the weather bow, and the hiss of exploding bubbles, and the faint wash of froth churned up by the rudder below you.

Two bells are struck, and all is quiet once more. The skipper has been on deck, talked with the mate, pushed his bronzed face betwixt you and the binnacle, and after a few turns and several prolonged looks aloft and around the sea, has gone below again. The wind has steadily freshened, and the ship, under all plain sail, heels amid the darkness like a leaning column of white vapour. So softly she sweeps through the snow with which she girdles her shapely length, curtseying with queenly

grace as she runs over the long-drawn undulations out of whose inky coils the wind is striking phosphoric sparks, that she steers herself; you have nothing to do but keep hold of the spokes, and let the breeze blow the noble fabric along. The deep gloom is full of strange sounds now that the seamen are forward, and all is silent aft.

. Aspirit-like minstrelsy echoes down from the glimmering inclined heights like a far-off chorus of human voices; the wind is full of the mysterious sound. It does not appear to come from the ship, but from a group of invisible ghostly creatures sailing through the air over the mastheads, and setting the moaning voices and sobbing wash of the ocean to melodies which may easily seem to make this darkness belong to the night of a world peopled by phantoms and creatures without similitude in human knowledge. Hark! how plaintive is the song of the bow-wave that falls in an arch of green fire from the shearing stem, and rolls aft in a white swirl, interlaced with fitful and sullen flashes of phosphoric light! But the breeze freshens yet; you cannot count a dozen stars in the void of gloom overhead, the music aloft takes a clearer note, straining sounds are audible as the passing swell rolls the ship to windward, the white water under the main sheet rises closer to the scuppers and flashes fast and far from under the counter into the blackness over the stern. An order is sharply bawled out, and some hands come tumbling aft and jump into the mizzen rigging to roll up the cross-jack. A hoarse song reaches you from the forecastle as the flying jib downhaul is manned, and at the same moment the fore and mizzen royal halliards are let go. You hear this canvas flapping in the gloom amid the chorus of the men on the crossjack yard as they trice up the bunt.



There must be no more wool-gathering with you now. The wheel is giving you as much work as you want; every now and again a smart kick stiffens your arms into iron, and you begin to feel that your jacket will have to come off soon.

For some time nothing more is done, but the watch keep on their feet and stand about ready for the next call, which they know will not be long delayed. The sea to windward is full of white glancings, and the breaking heads make a vague light of their own which gives you a sight of the water for some distance. The canvas that has been taken off the ship counts for nothing; the main royal is still on her, and she is heeling over like a racing yacht, striking the bow swell with a stem that hisses like red-hot iron, and shattering the coils of liquid jet into foam, which widens out on either hand of her into a storm of snow, in the midst of which the flying hull of the vessel is as clearly traced as were the shadows of her rigging in the moonlight, while her iron-hard distended canvas is full of the low thunder of the pouring blast, and her forecastle is dark with flying spray that sweeps over the rail and strikes the deck like a hail storm. It is noble sailing, and this booming and hooting ocean night wind is something to be made the most of while it lasts; but it gives you at the wheel as much occupation as you relish. It is like drawing teeth to "meet her" as the swell sweeps the ship round; and at last the captain, who is again on deck, and who has been standing at the binnacle for five minutes, sings out for another hand to come aft to the wheel. A figure tumbles along in a hurry and stations himself to leeward of you; and thereupon your work, though it is by no means half as easy again, becomes considerably lighter than it was. "Hold on a minute, Bill," says

your mate, and he feels over his pocket for a chew of tobacco. The quid found and properly stowed away in his cheek, your companion resumes his grasp, of the wheel, and in the haze of the binnacle lamp you may see his leathern jaws working like an old cow chewing the cud as he mumbles over the black fragment, sometimes directing a doleful squint at the compass, sometimes looking astern, while he helps you to put the wheel up or down, that you may keep the course swinging fair with the lubber's mark.

But the ship is being overdriven. At one bell it was a dead calm; it is not three bells yet, and here is the sea white with wind, and the vessel roaring through the smother with the blast thundering like a hurricane in the sails.

"In main royal and mizzen topgallant sail."

The canvas rattles like an old waggon over a stony street as the clewlines are manned, and whilst furling it the foretopgallant halliards are let go. What other sails are taken in you do not know, for the ship wants much clever watching, and the skipper is at hand to bring you up with a round turn if the vessel should be a quarter of a point off her course. Being eased, she steers more comfortably, but whole topsails and courses and main-topgallant sail are rushing her through it fiercely; the water on her lee quarter is pretty nearly as high as her main brace bumpkin, and the billow there goes along with her as if it were a part of the vessel; the main tack groans under the tearing and rending pull of the huge convex surface of canvas; now and again the blow of the swell which the racing vessel hits laterally makes her tremble fore and aft like a house under a clap of thunder. But she is to have all she can bear; the spell of dead calm is to be atoned for;

and so on through the shrilling and echoing darkness rushes the great fabric, sweeping her pallid canvas through the folds of gloom like the pinions of some vast spirit of the deep, making the water roar past her as she goes, breaking the dark swell into fire and foam as she rushes through the liquid acclivities with her powerful stem, with notes of mad laughter and lamentable wailing in her rigging, and with streaming decks which hollowly echo the fall of the solid bodies of water which shoot up just before the weather fore-rigging, and roll in a rush of creaming white into the lee scuppers as far aft as the break of the poop.

At last you hear the welcome sound of four bells; your trick is up, the wheel is relieved, and catching your jacket off the grating abaft the helm you walk forward, wiping the perspiration from your forehead; and, dropping down the fore scuttle, grope about for your pipe, which you light at the slush lamp that swings from a grimy beam, and returning on deck squat somewhere out of the way of the wind and wet, earnestly hoping that if it is to be a case of "reef topsails" there will be time for you to have your smoke out before the order is thundered forth.

## *THE BAILIFF AT SEA.*

SOME time ago I heard that a bailiff had been carried off to sea whilst in the execution of his duty. Anxious to learn the nature of his voyage, how he fared, and what condition he was in, mentally and physically, when restored to his anxious relatives, I made inquiries, and my diligence was at last rewarded by meeting the mate of the vessel that had sailed away with the man. Truth obliges me to own that this mate was not what might be considered a very gentlemanly person. It was not his velvet waistcoat, nor a rather vicious squint, nor a striking-looking bald head ringed with a layer of red hair like a grummet of rope yarns; the want of genteelness was noticeable in his abundant use of what is called "langwidge." "If I were a bailiff," thought I, as I glanced at his immense hands and huge arms which swelled out his coat-sleeves like the wind in a sailor's smallcloths drying in a strong breeze on the forestay, "I should not like to be put 'in possession' of a house occupied by *you*, my hearty."

I took a seat opposite him and said, "So you're the mate of the vessel that stole away the county court man?"

"Right," said he looking at me, without a move in his face; "but don't you go and say that I'm the mate

as gave him up again. If I'd had my way he'd be in charge o' any goods he might have come across in the inside of a whale by this time. I'd ha' chucked him overboard, as sure as that there hand's on this table," and down came a very leg-of-mutton of a fist with a blow that jerked his tumbler into the air. It was as good as a hint that the glass wanted filling; and when this was done, my companion opened the top buttons of his warm and tight velvet waistcoat, and composed himself into a posture for conversation.

"How," asked I, "came your skipper to have a bailiff aboard his vessel?"

"You may ask how," he growled; "what I say is, what right had he to come? I've got nothing to say against the law as it works for them as lives ashore—for them as are in fixed houses, and can't sail away with any blooming old rag of a chap, in a greasy coat, as come in with a bit of paper, and takes a cheer, and says, 'Here I sit, mates, till I'm paid off.' But what has the likes of such scowbanks got to do with sailor men when once they're aboard? What I say is, that when a man's on the water, his chest stowed away, articles signed, all the law that consarns him is in the cabin. The capt'n; the law; and not only the law, but judge, magistrate, bailiff, husher, registrar, high chancellor, and Lord Mayor o' London on top of it; and my argument is that any man as takes the liberty to walk over a wessel's side and order the captain about, and sing out contrary orders, and threaten to have him purged (I heard that very word. 'Ye'll have to purge for this,' says the bailiff. Did ye ever hear such language applied to a captain?)—any man, I say, as takes such a liberty as that ought to be dropped overboard without asking 'by your leave,' and, as I said before, left to take possession of any goods he

come across in the inside of a fish or at the bottom of the ocean."

I waited until he had partially quenched his excitement by a long pull at his tumbler, and then asked him again how it happened that his vessel had been boarded by a bailiff.

"I'll tell you," he answered. "The wessel was a brig of 300 tons. Coming home she plumped into a schooner. It was the schooner's fault; we sung out to her to get out of the road; instead of doing which she ported her helm as if to provoke us, and in we went, doing her a deal of damage and carrying away our own jibboom. Well, we arrived in port and discharged, and then filled up again with coal. It was Toosday afternoon, the sky middling dirty, and a fresh breeze of wind blowing. We hauled out and lay at a mooring buoy, waiting for the tide to serve. I was talking to the captain when I took notice of a boat coming along, rowed by a couple o' watermen, and a chap in a chimbley-pot hat sitting in the starn sheets.

"'Is that boat for us?' says the captain, looking.

"'Why,' I says, 'it looks as if she meant to run us down. Is it a wager? Bust me if hever I saw watermen pull like that afore!'

"They were dragging on their oars as if they would spring 'em, lying back until nothing but their noses was to be seen above the gunwale, and making the water fly in clouds over the cove in the starn as if prompt drowning was too good for him, and he was to be smothered slow. They dashed alongside, hooked on, and the fellow in the chimbley-pot hat comes scraping over the rail, shaking himself free o' the water as he tumbled on to the deck like a Newfoundland dog.

"'Just in time, captain,' says he, with an impudent

kind-o' smile, rummaging in his side-pocket; and with that he houts with a sort of dockiment, and hands it to the skipper.

" 'What's this?' says the skipper, smelling round the paper as it might be, but never offering to touch it.

" 'Only a horder for you to return to the bosom of your family,' he says, 'as the date o' your sailing's not yet fixed.'

" 'Isn't it?' says the captain, breathing short. 'Who are you, and what d'ye want?'

" 'I'm a bailiff,' says the man; 'and I'm here to take charge o' this wessel, pending the haction that's been entered against her in the Hadmiralty side o' the County Court by the schooner as ye was in collision with.'

" 'Can ye swim?' asks the captain.

" 'Never you mind whether I can or not,' says the bailiff, looking round at us, for all hands was collected and listening their hardest.

" 'Because,' says the captain, 'if you can't swim you'd better turn to and hail that boat to come back again and put ye ashore.'

" 'No, no,' says the bailiff, 'I'm not going ashore, my friend. I'm here to take charge o' this brig and stop her from going to sea.'

" Had the captain chosen then and there to give orders for that bailiff to be dropped overboard, I believe I'm the man as would have executed the command. Taking the temper I was then in, I don't know anything that would ha' given me more satisfaction to perform. The aggravation of being stopped when we were all ready to get away was the least part of it: it was the bailiff's cool grins, the impudence in his eyes as he looked round, as much as to say, 'All what I see is mine,' his taking the skipper's place and saying ye shan't do this, and I won't

allow that, that made me want to lay hands upon him. The captain stared at him a bit, as if considering what he should do ; then turning to me, he asked me the time. I told him.

“ ‘In another quarter of an hour,’ says he, ‘loose the torpsails and make ready to get away.’

“ ‘You’d better not,’ says the bailiff ; ‘it’ll be gross contempt of court if you do.’

“ ‘Court !’ says the skipper. ‘Court ! there is no court here, Mr. Bailiff. This is a brig, not a court. Don’t talk of courts to me. The gross contempt is of your committing. How dare you stand there ordering of me ?’

“ ‘Rest assured,’ says the bailiff, ‘you’ll be punished if you don’t do what I say. You’ll have to purge in open court, and that’s a job that may cost ye enough to lay you up in the union for the rest of your natural days.’

“ ‘Stow that,’ says I, doubling up my fist and stepping close to the fellow, ‘if the captain stands that kind o’ jaw, I won’t.’

“ ‘I’m here in the hexecution of my duty,’ says the bailiff, dropping his confident grins, and beginning to grow whitish. ‘Whatever you do contrairy to my orders you’ll do at your peril.’

“And so saying he walks right aft, and sits on the taffrail with his arms folded.

“ ‘Never was any quarter of an hour longer than that which the captain told me to wait. I had my watch in my hand, and all the time I was afraid the skipper would change his mind and give in to the bailiff, who sat aft with his hat over his ears, looking at the shore with his little eyes.

“ ‘Time’s up, sir !’ I bawled to the captain.

“ ‘Loose the torpsails,’ he sings out, and in a moment



all hands were running about, sheeting home, and yelling out at the ropes, being as much afraid as I was that if we were not quick the sight of the dogged bailiff 'ud operate upon the skipper's intellect and stop our just revenge upon that funkshonary's audacity. The bailiff seeing the men at work, tumbles off the taffrail and comes running forrards.

" 'D'ye mean to say you don't intend to obey the law ? ' he shouts out, holding on to his chimbley-pot.

" ' Out of the ways ! ' answers the skipper, ' there's no room for law here. We're full up, mate ; and since ye're bound for a voyage, blow your nose and wave your hand to them as ye're a parting from ! ' and, as he says this, the wessel, catching the wind that was coming strong enough to make nothing above our topsails necessary, lays down to it, and we heads for the open water.

" I saw the bailiff staring wildly around him, as if he really *would* jump overboard, and it was worth a month's pay to see him looking like that, and holding his hat on.

" ' Why, man, ' he shouts to the captain, ' you're never in earnest : d'ye know what you're a doing of ? ' and, finding that the skipper took no notice, he calls out to the men, ' You'll work this vessel at your peril if you obey your captain. My orders are to stop this brig, and if you don't allow me to execute my duty——' But just as he came to this the wessel met the first of the seas which were rolling outside the harbour—stiff seas they wos, for it was blowing half a gale o' wind ; she put her nose into it, and then rolled over, fit to bring her lower yardarms into the water ; away flew the bailiff's chimbley-pot hat clean overboard, and ye may boil me alive if I didn't think he meant to follow it ; for the send o' the wessel tripped him over the weather hatch coamings, and he seemed to shoot—ay, as neatly as if he'd been kicked by

one of them giants I used to read about when I was a little 'un—clean into the lee scuppers, where he lay stunned as I thought, until all on a sudden he jumped up and went clawing along till he come to the lee o' the after deck house, where he squatted down, looking with his yaller face and blowing hair like a Madagascar monkey recovering from a fit of intoxication."

Here my companion broke into a loud laugh, which he repeated again and again, as if the thoughts awakened in his mind were of too exquisite a kind to be dismissed with a single guffaw.

"I don't know," he continued, after a bit, wiping his eyes, and then fixing his dismal and malignant squint upon me, "whether on the whole we should ha' done better by dropping him overboard. The brig was as deep as pretty nigh twice her tonnage in coal could make her; she was a wet boat at any time; but now she tumbled about as if she had made up her mind to drown herself. I reckon she knew she had a bailiff aboard. Every dip forrards threw the water over her head in oceans; she'd roll to wind'ard almost as heavily as to leeward, so that the decks was all awash, and I was looking and hoping all the time to see the bailiff fetch away. But there was enough law left in him to keep him holding on. I was standing to wind'ard of the house—the skipper being aft agin the wheel—when Mr. Bailiff comes staggering round, his breeches clinging to his legs like wet brown paper, and his shoes full o' water.

"'Hallo, shipmate!' I sings out, seeing him making for the cabin door, 'where are you bound to? Aren't you happy where you are?'

"'I'm going to lie down on one of the lockers,' says he. 'I feel half froze, and I shall be sick presently.'

“ ‘ You may be half froze and sick too,’ says I, ‘ but smother me, Mr. Bailiff, if you shall use the cabin.’ ”

“ ‘ Not use the cabin ? ’ says he, gaping at me, and talking as if there was something in his swaller ; ‘ d’ye mean to keep me on deck all night ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Don’t ask no questions,’ says I. ‘ You’re here by French leave. Nobody wants you. If I had my way you’d be towing astern, with your neck in a bowline ; and if all the rest o’ your tribe and the blooming ’tornies you sarve were tailed on in your wake, I’d be willing to woyage round the world, and never grumble if we took years in reaching home.’ ”

“ I was in a passion, which rose my voice, and the skipper, hearing me, comes over.

“ ‘ Hallo, bailiff ! ’ says he, cheerfully ; ‘ not drowned yet, my lad ? What d’ye think o’ the weather ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Captain,’ says the man, ‘ you’ve carried me away by force. D’ye mean to freeze me to death by keeping me on deck all night ? Your mate here says I’m not to use the cabin.’ ”

“ ‘ Why should he use it, capt’n ? ’ says I. ‘ Could a sailor man sit with the likes of him ? I’ve messed afore now with Chaneymen ; I’ve slept along with Peruvian beachcombers when the air’s been that thick with the smell of onions ye might have leant agin it, but ye may boil me, skipper,’ says I, ‘ if ever I occupied a cabin along with a bailiff afore, and if he’s to share that crib along with us, I’ll sleep forrards.’ ”

“ ‘ You hear that, bailiff,’ says the skipper. ‘ I can’t let my mate live forrards to oblige you. If you’re cold I dare say the cook ’ll let you warm yourself in the galley. But nobody wanted you here. You were not invited, consequently it’s not for you to grumble if you don’t find yourself perfectly comfortable and happy.’ ”

"But as he says this, Nature fell to manhandling the bailiff as if she'd taken his own trade 'upon herself,' and making one rush he lay over the lee rail so ill that I never saw the equal of it, even in a Frenchman; he twisted himself about just as if he'd been revolving on a corkscrew; the water blowing over the forward weather rail hit him neatly, and he was like a streaming rag in five minutes.

"We left him enjoying himself and went on with our work. It was falling dark, and not only blowing hard, but there was the look of a whole gale of wind in the south-west sky. The brig was making desperate bad weather of it under lower torpsails and reefed foresail, taking in the water fit to wash every movable thing overboard, and shoving through it very slowly with a surprising sag to leeward. The skipper went below for some supper, and after a bit he calls me in.

"'Where's the bailiff?' says he.

"'Don't know exactly,' I says. 'To leeward somewhere. There's a figure half over the rail just abaft the fore rigging, if that's him.'

"'I've been tarning it over in my mind,' says the skipper, 'and I've got a notion, William,' says he, 'that we'd ha' done better not to bring that bailiff along with us.'

"'But he wouldn't go ashore when you told him,' says I.

"'Quite true,' says the captain; 'but that won't make it better for us. After all, the law's not a thing ye can take liberties with, and there's something in his threat of making me purge in open court, William,' says he, 'which mightn't matter if I knew what it meant; but, being ignorant, I'm willing to think it alarming.'

"'Pooh,' says I, 'it's only a lawyer's word. There's

nothing in it. They use onintelligible words to scare plain men; but there can't be anything more terrifying in language ye don't understand than in language ye do.'

" 'I wish I had some book aboard that 'ud explain that word,' says he. 'The bailiff 'll know; but I'll not ask him for fear he should think me afraid. But we can't let him starve. Better send him here and let him get something to eat.'

"I was going to argue, but he wouldn't listen.

" 'No, no,' says he, 'send him here; ' and I knew by that that the fear o' the law was beginning to master him.

"Well, it was my duty to obey, so I went on deck, and after rummaging about I found the bailiff sitting up to his hips in water against the scuttle-butt abreast of the galley.

" 'Come along,' says I, 'supper's in the cabin, and the captain wants you there.'

"He stood up, but was so cramped in his timbers that he could scarcely shuffle along, and I had to drag him by the collar. When the captain saw by the lamp-light the plight the fellow was in, his heart failed him altogether. There was no more proper dignified scorn.

" 'Why,' says he, looking at him, 'I didn't think it was such a bad job as that,' and he jumped up and fetched him a suit of dry clothes, and then poured out a dose of brandy. This was regular knuckling under. He had gone on con-sidering and con-sidering until he was in an out-and-out funk. There was no use in my saying anything. The bailiff had growd on a sudden to become the strongest man aboard that brig, though as for me, when I tell you that had I been the captain I'd have sent the fellow aloft, and kept him there all night, as a hint

to leave sailor men alone on future occasions, ye'll allow that *my* caving in wur only because I wasn't skipper, and that's all. Well, sir, to cut this yarn short, luck turned in favour of that bailiff with a vengeance. At midnight it was blowing a hurricane, and the skipper said there was no good going on facing it, he must put back.

"'Thère's a handier port,' says I, naming it, 'than the one we're from to make for.'

"'Ay,' says he, 'but since we're bound to up keeleg it'll look better to carry the bailiff slick home than to give him a railway journey.'

"It would have made a hangel growl to hear the captain, all through fear, placing this bailiff afore the werry hurricane that was blowing, and thinking of him only whom he'd ha' gladly drowned a few hours earlier, instead of the wessel and the lives aboard her. But reasoning was out of the question. The brig was just a smother of froth, the gale roaring like thunder, the seas as high as our maintop, and the old hooker shivering with every upward heave, as if she must leave all the lower part of her behind her. It was a job to get the vessel round, but we managed it, and at half-past five o'clock in the morning we fetched the harbour we had started from and brought up, nothing having carried away but the bailiff's chimbley-pot."

"And what was the result of all this?" said I.

"Why," said he, with a loud rumbling laugh, "the skipper had to find out what purging in hopen court means. He was brought up afore an old gentleman, who lectured him for about half an hour, said that the law was meant to be respected and that it would be a bad job for any man as sneered at it; and after having talked out all that lay in his mind, he up and fines the captain

ten-pounds and fifty shillings costs. It served him right. He'd no business to bring that bailiff back. But he was hoperated on by the fear o' words, and depend upon it the man who allows that sort of alarm to wisit him is not a fit person to carry a bailiff to sea."

## OFF THE HORN.

THE passage of the Horn has long ceased to be a thing to boast about. Time was when a man who had doubled that formidable iron headland reckoned he had performed a feat that entitled him to a good deal of respect. This is characteristically shown in "Two Years before the Mast," the author of which dwells at great length upon the struggles of the *Alert* among the ice in latitude 58 deg. South, as though he considered that part of the voyage to be something proper to hand on to posterity in a bulky form. Not so much notice is taken of the achievement nowadays. It still confers privileges; it qualifies a man to "spit to windward," for instance, and no doubt it inspires many a youthful midshipman or apprentice with much big talk and nautical airs in the presence of lads who have yet to see with their own eyes what an Antarctic iceberg is like.

But the passage of the Horn is much too common an occurrence in these days to inflate anything but a boy. In Dana's time a ship was a wonderful object down there; it seemed almost a deserted ocean; nothing was to be met but an old "spouter" jogging along with stump topgallant-masts, and her sides full of boats; or a cargo-ship, with a freight of "notions," bound to the Peruvian or Mexican ports. Now, if it is not so full as the Atlantic,



it is pretty nearly as busy; for since those days Australia has grown a mighty and populous continent; towns have sprung up as if by magic along the western seaboard of the Americas; even the little remote South Sea Islands have lent a hand in the thronging of the great Cape Horn highway; and the most desolate, sterile region in the world—such a harsh, forbidding, icebound piece of coast as no man who has passed within sight of it can ever forget—is skirted, week after week and year after year, by scores and scores of great steamers and sailing ships, bound west, and east, and north, if never south. The Panama Canal threatens the famous old route; and should that waterway ever be completed, the Horn will probably fall even more out of date than the Cape of Good Hope has. It is not to be expected, however, that even the most ancient mariners will be found to mourn over the desuetude. There are many uncomfortable spots to be encountered in a voyage round the world; but a turn off the Horn, in the months which we call summer here, probably beats anything in the shape of marine discomforts to be found on the ocean. Of course this is speaking of it as sailors find it—as it is experienced by the men who have to remain on deck, go aloft, stand at the wheel, and whose shelter is a fore-castle with the scuttle closed, and not a dry stitch of clothes to be found by groping.

For it is off the Horn where the galley-fire gets washed out, and where, therefore, the streaming and hungry watch below have nothing to eat but what they may find in the bread-barge; where the tears freeze in a man's eyes faster than the most pitying angel of a woman living could wipe them away; where one is glad to keep one's seaboots on for fear that one's toes may go as well as the boots when they are hauled off; where

everything is like sheet and bar iron aloft; where the very cockroaches turn in to wait for the Equator, and the hardiest rats are so put to it with frost that they watch in the gloom until a man goes to bed and falls asleep, in the hope of getting a meal off his nose. Unhappily the Horn does not improve. It blows and snows as hard there now as it did when the old *Wager* rounded it, and when Drake or Anson was rolling among its stupendous combers. Other places are more tractable. For instance, Dana, twenty-four years after he made his memorable voyage, found that the climate off Point Conception had altered, that the south-easters were no longer the curse of the coast, and that vessels anchored inside at Santa Barbaro and San Pedro all the year round. No one could have told him this of the Horn. Had he chosen to beat to the eastward or westward a second time in the months when the attempt was made by the *Pilgrim* and the *Alert* he would have found the same blinding snowstorms, the same hurling seas, the same sunless, melancholy sky, the same plunging, washing, straining, roaring tumblification he recorded forty-two years ago. Let the story of a brig of 300 tons' register bear witness to this.

It was in the month of May that the vessel in question was bound to Callao with a cargo of coal, but a strong north-westerly gale had driven her much further to the southward than the captain had any desire to find himself. The gale left them on a Wednesday morning, rolling their yardarms into it on a real Cape Horn swell. What is there to which to liken these prodigious heavings? The actual altitude of those liquid hills may seem small in comparison with the appearance they present when viewed from their hollows; but whatever may be their height, to lie dipping and wallowing among them in a vessel of the tonnage of

that brig is to undergo an experience hardly less formidable than what was devised by the Mohocks, when they shut up old women in empty casks, and sent them spinning down Ludgate Hill. What straining and groaning and complaining of the tortured fabric, if it be of timber! Every beam, carling, tree-nail, transom, knee, stanchion, and futtock lifts up its dismal creaking and wailing voice as the bewildered craft, with her topsails rattling in the motionless atmosphere, is swung like a pendulum up the shoulder of the swelling mass of green water, leaning down as she goes until she is fairly on her beam-ends, with pots and pannikins, sea-boots and sea-chests, dishes, books, furniture, and whatever else may be inside of her, fetching away with dreadful noise to leeward, amid a volley of sea-blessings from skipper, cook, and steward, and muffled shouts from the watch below in the forecabin.

Luckily Cape Horn calms do not last very long; indeed, there is nothing but "weather" down in those regions, and a calm is only a short pause among the gales and squalls whilst they are considering whose turn it is next. Within an hour from the time of the first gale failing them, another gale from a little to the north-of-west was bowing down the bothered and beaten brig, which, under lower topsails and fore-topmast staysail, manfully struggled to look up to it with her head in the direction of Cape Horn and her wake streaming away over her weather quarter. It was one of those pictures of storm which are rarely seen in like perfection out of the parallels that divide Terra del Fuego from the South Shetlands—an ocean of mountainous seas, raising each of them a note of thunder as their arching summits crashed from a dark, oil-smooth ridge of green water into huge avalanches of snow: a sky of gloomy slate,

along which masses of scud—torn, ragged, and tendril-shaped—were flying with incredible velocity. The horizon was broken with the incessant rising and falling of the pyramidal billows, dark as the night, against a ring of sooty clouds, from which, ever and anon, one would break away, like a winged messenger of evil, whitening and veiling the air with a kind of boiling appearance as it swept its furious and blinding discharge of snow and hail along. No wonder that in olden times the man who had passed these tempestuous and inclement seas should have considered himself an object of importance. Stand, in fancy, upon the deck of that labouring brig, and survey one of the countless aspects of marine life. The seas are breaking heavily over the port bow of the vessel, deluging her forward and racing aft in a foaming torrent as she sinks her stern to mount the huge surge that almost lays her yardarms level. The bitter, raw, flaying cold of the wind there is nothing in language to express. The flying spray smites the exposed face like a volley of sail needles. Now and again a squall of snow and hail comes along with so much fury in it that it takes the breath away from the strongest of the seamen cowering with their backs to it. The rigging crackles to every strain put upon it like burning wood. The snow upon the yards makes them glimmer like lines of pallid light as they furiously sway against the dismal ground of the dark and rushing sky. There are spears and arrow-heads of ice upon the bulwark rail, upon the catheads, upon the scuttle-butts lashed amidships; and though the seas repeatedly break over them they are always left standing. The helmsman, with his hard fists wrapped up in mits, rigged out in oilskins from his head to his huge, well-greased sea-boots, and with the after-thatch of his sou'-wester blown

up by the gale, and standing out from his head like the tail of a gull, gets the full of it. Nothing of the man is visible but a fragment of mahogany face showing between the flannel ear-covers of his head-gear, and a pair of watering eyes, which he now and again wipes upon his mit when a pause in the yaws and come-to's give him a chance to raise one of his hands from the spokes.

How would some of our summer-water mariners appear beside that salt-water sailor were they to have stood their trick at the helm on such an occasion as this; gazing to windward as yonder skipper is doing, holding on like grim death to a backstay, with the salt drying in crystals in his eyes; or making one of that oil-skinned group there to leeward of the galley, stamping their boots upon the deck to put life into their frozen toes, ducking as a shiek in the wind warns them of the passage of a green sheet of water over their heads, biting doggedly upon the tobacco in their cheeks, and growling as they reflect that another three hours must elapse before they are privileged to quit the deck and take such warmth and comfort as they may find in the forecastle, whose darkness is scarcely revealed by the sputtering slush-lamp, and whose beams and stanchions are decorated with draining clothes?

It was already blowing two or three ordinary gales in one, and the lower topsails were more than the brig could safely stagger under, though the captain held on, since by ratching to the northward he might hope to get clear of the ice, of which, on the previous night and that morning, some monstrous specimens had hove in view. Indeed, at one bell in the afternoon watch, during a flaw in a heavy squall of snow that was blowing in horizontal lines along the sea, they caught sight on the lee bow of the greenish marble-like glimmer of a berg that looked

RECEIVED ON

to be a mile long and as tall as St. Paul's Cathedral. It vanished, but reappeared broad on the lee-beam when the squall passed, and stood out in its complete shape against the smoke-coloured gloom of the sky over the horizon, where, though it was four or five miles off, the men on the brig's deck could see the white, steam-like haze of the spray that flashed in clouds from its base, and fled past it in eddying volumes, and almost imagine that they heard the thunder of the smiting surges reverberating in the hollows and caverns of the mighty frozen mass. But when it had drawn on the lee-quarter another squall blew up and smothered it, and after that it disappeared entirely.

It was at this time that the gale increased in fury, and the sea grew terrible. The weather was enough to blow the masts out of the vessel, and all hands were turned up to stow both topsails and bring the brig to the wind under a small storm staysail. How is the aspect of that Cape Horn ocean to be described?—the rage of its headlong activities; the long sweep of olive-green heights, piebald with hissing and seething tracks of foam, blown along their gleaming sides; the hard iron-grey of the heavens, out of which the storm of wind was rushing, bearing upon its wings masses of vapour, which it tore to pieces in its fury; and the cold—the piercing, poignant cold—of the gale, with its lashing burden of sleet and spray and hail?

The men had come off the yards after having struggled, each watch of them, for hard upon three-quarters of an hour with the frozen topsails, when the brig shipped a sea just abaft the weather fore rigging. It was a whole mountain of green water, and it fell in a dead weight of scores of tons upon the deck, beating for awhile the whole life out of the devoted vessel, and

making her pause, trembling and stunned, in the roaring hollow in which it had found her, whilst above the thunder of the dreadful stroke could be heard the crash of breaking wood, of splintered glass, and the rending noise of deck furniture torn from its strong fastenings. A heavy upward send drove the water off the decks, and all hands were found to be alive, holding on like grim death to whatever was next them; and then it was seen that a long range of the weather-bulwarks had been torn down flush with the deck, the cabin skylight broken into shivers, the long boat amidships stove, and nothing left of the port-quarter boat but the frame of its keel and stem, dangling at the davits. The loss of the two boats was a bad job, but still worse was the terrible straining the deeply freighted vessel had undergone, and the destruction of the skylight that left the cabin open for the floods of water that rolled along the deck. The benumbed and half-frozen crew turned to to secure what remained of the skylight and to cover it with tarpaulins; but whilst they were in the midst of this work the brig gave a heavy lurch, which made the men believe it was all over with her; and before a single cry could have been raised, a portion of the weather fore rigging carried away, and in a trice the fore-topmast broke off at the cap, and fell over the side—a horrible muddle—with all its raffle of sail, yards, and gear.

The early Antarctic night was now drawing down over the furious sea, and it was already so dark that the men could hardly discern one another's faces. Some active fellows sprang forward at the risk of their lives to cut away the rigging, and release the wreck alongside before the yards upon it should pierce the brig's bottom; and this being done, the helm was put hard up, with the idea of wearing ship, in order to secure the foremast.

But the storm-fiend had marked this unhappy brig, and the successive blows came thick and fast. Scarcely was the wrecked spar sent adrift and the helm shifted, when all the rest of the port fore rigging carried away, and the foremast fell down, carrying with it the bowsprit, main topmast, and a portion of the port main rigging.

By this time it was as dark as the bottom of a well; the brig wallowed before the seas with a mass of wreckage over her side, pitching miserably in the fearful hollows, and huge surges curling their white heights around her. A man had need to be a seaman indeed, and to have a seaman's heart in him too, to act at all in such a moment as this. The full extent of the mischief could not be guessed. Nothing was certain but that the brig was dispossessed of all but her mainmast, and that there were some heavy spars over the side, pounding at her like battering-rams with every hurl of the raging seas. The first business would be to get clear of this mischief, and the men went to work with their knives, feeling for the lanyards and hacking and cutting with a will. Darkness gives a peculiar horror to disasters of this kind at sea. In the daylight you can see what has happened; you can use your eyes as well as your hands and make despatch, and the worst is evident. But the darkness leaves everything to be guessed at. You shout for help for some job too heavy for you, and it does not come. The outlines of the sea grow colossal by the illusion of the faint light thrown out from their breaking crests; you cannot perceive the flying water so as to duck away from it, and in a breath you may find yourself overboard. It is all distraction and uproar, loud and fearful shouting, and blind groping. When at last the wreck was cleared, the vessel seemed little better than a sheer hulk, nothing standing but her mainmast, upon



which the mainyard swung helplessly. That she should have lived through that long and fearful Antarctic night, the seas combing over her, icebergs in her vicinity, and draining in water with every roll, must count among the miracles of the deep. Her people had discovered that the mainmast, having little to support it, had worked loose, breaking away the mast-combings, and starting the planking all around it; so that through this large aperture the water poured into the hold in torrents. The port pump had been disabled by the fall of the masts, and the only other pump was manned and worked with such energy as dying men will put into their arms; but in less than an hour the coal choked it, and now nothing remained but to lighten the vessel by throwing the cargo overboard and baling with buckets. All through those black and howling hours, amid freezing falls of water, and in the heart of the raging Cape Horn storm, this severe labour was pursued, so that when the bleak and melancholy dawn broke upon the desolate ocean it found the brig still afloat, and the brave hearts in her grimly fighting death, though faint, famished, and frozen. Help came shortly before noon. A sail was made out heading dead for the wreck, and by the time she was abreast, the wind and sea had so far moderated as to enable her to bring all the men safely off. It was not a moment too soon, for twenty minutes after the crew had been transferred to the ship the brig was observed to give a heavy lurch, and so lie on her beam-ends, never righting, but slowly sinking in that position—so slowly that after her hull had vanished her mainmast remained forking out like the lifted arm of a drowning man.

When this story was told me I could not help thinking of what the Horn route was in Dana's time, and the

very small chance that brig's crew would have had for their lives had her name been the *Pilgrim*, and had she been beating to the westward forty years ago. • Certain it is, that however ships may come and go, and change the nature of their material and the form of their fabrics, the weather in the Pacific down there is very much what it was in Anson's time, and as it has been, in all probability, since the creation of the world. Other climates may vary in the lapse of ages, and south-easters may in places be found to work themselves into north-westerns. But the Horn remains always the same harsh, tempestuous, frozen headland, echoing at this hour the hurricane notes which reverberated over it centuries ago, and grimly overlooking the stormiest space of waters in the world. Who, then, does not hope that the final construction of the Panama Canal may abridge the bleak and icebound horrors of that point of continent which looks on the chart to stretch its leagues and leagues of tongue into the very heart of the southern frozen waters? To be sure, the passage of the famous cape has long since ceased to be a wonder; but none the less is it full of perils to vessels which, like the brig I have written about, are at the mercy of the monstrous seas and furious gales of that formidable tract of Pacific waters.

## A STRANGE CHASE.

ONE is sorry to hear of the growth of the very un-English habit of sheering off and scuttling away after a collision. The first duty of a shipmaster who plumps into a vessel or is run into is to stand by, if the condition of his ship will permit him, and render all the assistance in his power. There is nothing more despicable and cowardly than running away after a disaster of this kind. We know what came of such conduct in the case of the *Northfleet*; and week after week one reads in the shipping papers how such and such a vessel was run into, and how the other ship made off, and how so many people were drowned in consequence. Darkness, that is fruitful of collisions, is also, unhappily, favourable to these mean and unmanly escapes. At night it mostly happens that the utmost you can tell of the vessel that comes grinding into your ship is that she is big or little, a steamer or a sailing-vessel, and rigged in such and such a fashion. The letters on her nameboard cannot be deciphered; she will not answer your hail; and her reply to the melancholy shout of "For God's sake don't leave us, we believe we are sinking," is to shift her helm and vanish in the gloom. The obligation to record such casualties in the log-book or to depone to them before receivers of wrecks does not, it is to be feared, always

imply the sort of accuracy that would be useful to sufferers. From time to time a buoy is sunk, a lightship run into, and the Trinity Corporation offer a handsome sum of money for information, but without avail. The absence of all reference by shipmates to such occurrences must make one hope that they are mainly the work of foreigners. But whatever the flag under which a captain sails, his sneaking away from a disaster in which he has had a hand expresses a species of cowardice that presses heavily upon the humbler order of shipowners. A little coaster is run into by a fine large vessel, which stops a minute or two and then proceeds. The master of the coaster may be her owner, and all that he has in the world is in his little ship. She is not sunk, but her masts are over the side, and she looks as if she had been for some hours under the guns of a fort. Whether or not the master be to blame for the collision, he is pretty sure to consider that the fault was not his; and his hardship is, that whilst he stands a chance of being ruined, he is unable to discover the name of the ship that ran into him, so as to be able to bring her owners into a court of justice, and take his risk as a litigant.

I was amused and interested some time since by hearing the story of the resolute behaviour of Mr. John Whitear, master of the schooner *Jehu*, a vessel of about 150 tons. Giving chase, if you can, is one way, at least, of clearing up the mystery of the paternity of an offending ship that sneaks off in the darkness in the hope of saving her owner's pocket. Any way, Mr. John Whitear's conduct illustrates a spirit pleasant to come across in the homely prosaics of the marine life of to-day. Eighty and a hundred years ago it was men of the stamp of Mr. Whitear who commanded British privateers; otherwise how should the maritime memorials of that kind of

vessel be so full as they are of the unflinching obstinacy and the grim courage which followed the fleeing enemy over leagues and leagues of ocean, through storms and through calms, finally overhauling and boarding the breathless chase in latitudes so remote from the point of departure that the span between the two places might even now be reckoned a long voyage?

Not very many days ago, then, the *Jehu*, with 280 tons of coal aboard, was quietly jogging along on her way to her port of destination. The afternoon had been fine, and the night came down very clear and bright, with starlight. The water was smooth, though a merry wind was blowing, and the little vessel under easy canvas lay softly leaning in the gloom, with the white water rippling and crisping past her sides in a hollow, brass-like tinkling. Starlight gives beauty even to a coalman; and I have known stump topgallant-masts and sails yawning upon sheets hard upon a fathom from the points in the yardarms through which they lead, make as dream-like and dainty a picture in the tender sobering shadows of the night as the tall and tapering rig of the handsomest yacht now afloat.

At all events, the *Jehu* was Mr. John Whitcar's seahome, and as he paced the weather side of the deck, sometimes squinting into the windward darkness where the loom of the land hung low upon the vague greyish softness of the water that way, or sometimes aloft where the stars, like so many benign and encouraging eyes, were tipping him cheerful winks through the black squares in the shrouds and over the main gaff and among the dim tracery of the standing and running rigging, whose heights seemed to bring near the sweeping enfoldment of the glittering heavens, as though the vast star-laden shadow were revolving and was weaving its circling

burden of gloom closer and closer yet round the lonely schooner journeying slowly along with a bell-like resonance of broken water around her, he was no doubt as well satisfied with his little hooker as the captain of an ocean steamer could be with his stately ship.

His pipe being smoked out, the weather looking as steady as a church, and all being well in every possible sense of that marine expression, Mr. John Whitear thought that no harm could come of his going below for a spell to take some rest. Accordingly, after exchanging a few words with his mate, and taking another good look to windward and then aloft, he walked to the companion and disappeared down the steps. But instead of going to bed like a landsman, he kept on his boots and his coat, merely removing his cap as a preliminary to turning in, and stretching himself upon a locker, within easy hearing of the first shout that should come down through the companion, he closed his eyes, and was presently contributing to the other creaking sounds raised in the plain and quaint little cabin by the occasional movements of the *Jehu*.

How it came about he could not say, not having been on deck at the time; but whilst he lay dreaming such peaceful dreams as should visit a master mariner whose whole professional life is dedicated to the careful attention of the three L's, he was suddenly aroused, and in some measure startled, by a loud and fearful cry in the companion of "Below, there! here's a barque running into us."

Fortunately, Mr. Whitear had no occasion to stay to dress himself; in a breath he was up the ladder and on deck. The first thing he saw was a large barque on the port bow, apparently paying off, having just gone about. Fresh as he was from a deep sleep, Mr. Whitear had all

his wits about him in a moment ; and he immediately perceived that, let him do what he liked and shout as he would, a collision was unavoidable. The barque loomed up large and massive in the darkness. Her lights were as plainly to be seen as the stars, whilst the *Jehu's* burned as brightly. The wind had freshened somewhat, and both vessels were heeling under it. All was silent aboard the barque—not the least sound could be heard ; and in that thrilling and breathless moment all other noises took a startling distinctness—the washing of water, the creaking of spars, the squeak up in the darkness of a sheave upon a rusty pin. There is no sensation comparable to what is felt in the few minutes which elapse between the approach and shock of two meeting vessels. A railway collision gives you no time. If by chance you look out of the carriage window and see what is going to happen, before you can sing out the thing has come and is over. But a collision at sea furnishes you with leisure to think, to anticipate, and to make an agony of the disaster before it actually befalls you. Whichever way the helm of the *Jehu* had been jammed would have been all the same, the barque was bound to come, and in a few moments there she was, with her bows towering like a cliff over the low bulwarks of the well-freighted *Jehu*, her jibboom and bowsprit arching across the little schooner's deck like a great spear in the hand of a giant.

The *Jehu* heeled over under the blow until the rail of her starboard bulwarks was flush with the water. The men came skurrying, half-naked, out of the fore-castle, thinking she was sinking, and rushed aft to be out of the way of whatever might tumble down from aloft. You heard the grinding noise of crushed wood, the thud of falling gear, the tearing of canvas. The weight of the

barque, that was a big vessel in ballast, swept the stern of the little *Jehu* to windward, rounding her in such a manner as to free them both. But by this time there was plenty of noise and activity to be noted aboard the barque. Orders were rattled out in plain English, and you could hear the scampering of feet and the songs of the seamen as they ran to and fro and pulled and hauled. She heeled over like a great shadow with her mainyards square and her fore-sheets flattened in. It was impossible to know what mischief she had done; and, running to the side, Mr. Whitear shouted to her at the top of his voice to stand by them, as he feared the schooner was sinking.

No answer was returned.

"They're leaving us!" cried the mate. "Look! they're trimming sail; they're swinging the mainyards!"

Again Mr. Whitear bawled to them not to abandon the schooner; but no answer was vouchsafed, and in a few moments it was not only seen that she was leaving them, but that she meant to get away as fast as she could, for they loosed their fore topgallant-sail and main-royal, and sheeted the canvas home with all expedition.

Under such circumstances most men would have contented themselves with bestowing a sea-blessing on the stranger, and then turned to to sound the bell, and, if the schooner was leaking fast, get the boats over. But Mr. John Whitear was made of the old, and, as some people might think, the right kind of stuff.

"Bill," says he to William Dart, A.B., who was at the wheel, "keep your eye upon that old catermerang while me and the mate overhauls the schooner. Follow her without a wink, William; for if there's a creak left in this old bucket, we'll stick to her skirts and have her name, though she should go all on sailing till we comes to Australey."



Forthwith he and the mate went to work, sounded the well, looked over the side, peered at the damage done aloft; and then, coming aft again, "She's tight and she's right, boys," said Mr. Whitear. "Now, bullies, here's a mess that's to cost some one pounds and pounds. That some one's not to be John Whitear; so, William, star-board your helm, my lad; and the rest of ye all-turn to and make sail forrard, every stich ye can find, and then we'll repair the main rigging, and get a new mainsail bent;" for he had discovered that the barque's jibboom had cut through the centre cloths of the mainsail, ripping it open from the head to the second reef-band as neatly as if a sailmaker's knife had done the job.

They all went to work with a will, putting uncommon agility into their limbs and spirits by calling the shadow ahead many hard salt names, and swearing they would catch her if she carried them into the Polar regions. The labour was severe, for there were not many of them to "turn-to;" nevertheless, they managed, in a time less by three-quarters than they would have occupied on any other occasion, to repair the damaged shrouds, set up preventer backstays, bend a new mainsail, and cover the little vessel with canvas. The barque was close-hauled, three or four miles ahead, on the port tack, lying over, as a light vessel will in such a merry breeze as was then blowing, under both royals and gaff topsail; she was trusting to her heels and running away, like a big bully from a little man whom he has accidentally hurt, and is afraid of. Her people would probably ridicule the idea of the deep-freighted schooner chasing them; indeed, they had left her apparently helpless, her port main rigging hanging in bights over the side, her mainsail in halves, and the whole fabric looking wrocked and stunned from the shock of the collision.

Meanwhile, Mr. John Whitear stumped the quarter-deck of his little craft, often pausing to point an old leather-covered telescope at the leaning shadow out away under the low-shining stars just the merest trifle to leeward of the lee knighthead, and then cocking the glass under his arm afresh, and swinging round with a sharp, obstinate stamp of the foot to resume his walk.

"Boys," he sung out, "there's no occasion for the watch below to remain on deck."

"No, no," was the gruff answer; "there's no going below till we've found out that vessel's name."

The wind came along with a fresh, strong sweep, and a deep moan in the gusts as they blew over the bulwark rail into the hollow glimmer of the great mainsail; there was a kind of flashful light in the breaking heads of the little black surges, and a regular rise and fall of fountain-like sound from forward, where the stem of the driven schooner was hissing through the dark water, and the wake ran away astern like a snow-covered road, until, looking at it, you seemed to see the dark water on either side stand up as if the white vein were the frothing stream of a cataract rushing into darkness betwixt the shadows of hills.

"Why, smother me, if she's not got the scent of us!" suddenly cried Mr. Whitear with the glass at his eye; "she's off three points, and there's no luff left in her! Boys, did any of you take notice if she had her stunsail booms aloft?"

"No," answered William Dart; "her foreyards were just up yonder" (pointing into the air), "an' I'll take my oath she'd got no booms on 'em."

"Then we'll run her down yet; we'll have her!" cried Mr. Whitear, fetching his knee a slap that sounded like the report of a pistol. "Keep her away a bit; ease

off the sheets fore and aft. Hurrah, my lads! the *Jehu* knows the road! We'll weather the sneak, boys!" And so he rattled on, sometimes talking to his men, sometimes to the schooner, and sometimes addressing the barque ahead.

Shortly after two o'clock in the morning, however, four or five sailing-vessels hove in sight and bothered Mr. Whitear exceedingly, for there was a chance of mistaking the chase among them and pursuing the wrong vessel. All hands were implored to keep a bright look-out, and the glass was now much more often at the skipper's eye than under his arm. It is strange enough to think of a little collier with 280 tons of coal in her bottom pursuing a vessel three times her size. It might really pass as a most satirical travestie of the old maritime business, were it not for the very strong commercial instincts at work in it. The purse was always as great a power on sea as on land, and the flight of the big barque from the little coalman was only another illustration of its supremacy:

To the great satisfaction of Mr. Whitear, the schooner turned out to be more than a match for the cowardly runaway. It was quite clear that the barque had no more sail to set; as it was, she was bowling along under a press of canvas that must have made her decks mighty uncomfortable, to judge from the sharp angle of her inclination. Had she chosen to put her helm up and bring the wind well aft, she would no doubt have walked away from the schooner, whose fore-and-aft canvas then would not have much helped her. But the barque could not forget that she had to work her way to windward, and that her port lay N.E. and not S.W.; and though she might slacken away her lee-braces in the hope of making the obstinate little schooner give

up, it would not answer her purpose to do more than that.

Inch by inch the *Jehu* crawled up to her. Just before daybreak the wind breezed up like a squall, though the sky was clear, and Mr. Whitear, who all through the night had watched the chase with the intentness of an old British commodore following a squadron of flying Frenchmen, shouted out that she had taken in her royals and gaff topsail, and that, as it was, she was nearly out of water to windward. But not so much as a ropeyarn was touched aboard the *Jehu*; she had never been so pressed since the hour that she was launched. She hove up the foam as high as the headboards; every bone of her trembled; the wind boomed away from under the foot of her sails in a thunder-note, and the sheets and weather standing rigging stood like bars of iron. There seemed as much eagerness in her shivering, rushing frame as in her skipper, whose excitement deepened as the square and leaning shadow ahead loomed bigger and bigger. Earnestly was it to be hoped that the port main rigging would stand all this straining; and yet such was the temper of the captain and the men of the brave little *Jehu*, that, I believe, had the mainmast gone overboard, they would have held on after the barque with a single spar, just as I once saw a man with one arm and a wooden leg give chase to a rogue who had sneered at his misfortunes.

The faint grey of the dawn was in the sky when the barque was brought to the wind again, and, after holding on for a short while with a close luff, went about. Before she had her foreyards braced round, the schooner had stayed and was on the starboard tack, savagely breaking the quick seas which were rolling in the wake of the wind, and finding all the advantage she needed in the

weathering she had made upon the barque, who, with the rising of the sun, appeared to lose all heart, for no more sail was made, and when she was braced up she was kept so close that the weather half of her fore top-gallant-sail was aback. The white sunshine that had flung a deep blue over the stars, and transformed the ocean into a tumbling green surface full of sparkles and white lines, and a horizon so clear that it was like the sweep of a brush dipped in bright green paint along the enfolding azure of the morning sky, gave stout-hearted Mr. John Whitear a good sight of the tall vessel he had been chasing all through the middle and morning watches. She was what he called "a lump of a barque," so light that half her metal sheathing was out of water, with very square yards and a main skysail mast, and she tumbled with such unwieldy motions upon the running seas that it seemed no longer wonderful that the *Jchu* should have been able to weather and forcereach upon her. Her way was almost stopped by the gripe of her luff, and within an hour of the time of her going about the schooner was on her weather quarter.

Mr. Whitear had already deciphered her name upon her stern, but he had some questions to ask; so, jumping on to the rail and clawing a backstay with one hand, whilst he put the other hand to his mouth, he bawled out, "Barque ahoy!"

"Hallo!" was the answer.

"What's the name of your vessel?" sang out Mr. Whitear.

"Have you forgotten how to read, skipper? It's under your nose," came the reply.

"You're the barque *Juno*, of Maitland, N.S.—that's clear enough on your stern," shouted Mr. Whitear, whose temper, inflamed by the long pursuit, was not

improved, as may be supposed, by this reception ; “ and you’re the vessel that ran into us last night, and carried away our shrouds, braces, and running gear, the main-rail, topgallant bulwarks, and split our mainsail.”

“ No, we ain’t,” was the reply. “ We know nothing of the job you’re talking about; so sheer off, will ye, and take care to spot the right party afore letting fly.”

Without answering, Mr. Whitear shifted his helm so as to bring his vessel to leeward of the barque; and then, running forward when the schooner had forged abreast of the other vessel, he shouted to the man who had answered his hail to look over the port bow of the barque and there he would see the marks of the schooner’s chain-plate bolts, whilst further evidence of the barque being the culprit lay in particles of her planking adhering to the *Jehu’s* chain-plates. This was too decisive to admit of further denial; and Mr. John Whitear having obtained all the information he required, walked aft again, once more shifted his helm, saluted the barque with a farewell flourish of his fist, and then gave orders to his men to trim sail and head for the port to which they were bound.

## *A SALVAGE JOB.*

AMONG the most picturesque and lively incidents of the sea are those of the encountering of abandoned vessels, and the struggles of the people who board them to carry them into port. Were it not for the imperative injunctions of owners, and the various obligations imposed upon shipmasters by the terms of charter-parties, policies, and the like, there is no doubt that we should hear very much oftener than we now do of the preservation of derelicts and their cargoes. The mariner often stumbles upon some substantial prize in this way. A ship is sighted, low in the water, with nothing standing perhaps but the stump of her foremast. A spell at the pumps eases her, she is overhauled, and her hold seen to be full of valuable cargo. She is taken in tow, and after several days, or perhaps weeks, of manœuvring, she is carried into port and found to be worth some thousands of pounds, a goodly portion of which goes to the men who navigated her into a place of safety. There is a touch of romance in such findings that never fails to render them amusing and even exciting reading; and as stories they are often rich in a high kind of marine characteristics.

One of these yarns, I remember, impressed me greatly at the time. The master of a vessel, called the

*Fides*, sighted a Dutch barque water-logged. On approaching her, only one man was to be seen on board. He proved to be the skipper, who said that his crew had refused to remain by the vessel, and had left him alone in her. He was brought aboard the *Fides*, but had not been there ten minutes when he begged to be sent to his water-logged barque again. His entreaties were so moving that the captain of the *Fides* yielded, and he was once more put in possession of his wreck and left there. Next day a vessel, called the *Ballater*, took him off, and the wonder was that the poor fellow had ever managed to keep his life on the deck of the wave-swept hulk. Here, in the most obscure form in the world, is an exhibition of the sailor's loyalty to his ship so great as to make a truly heroic figure of that Dutch captain. Narratives which recount the meeting with derelicts and their conveyance to port often reveal some of the best qualities of the sailor—I mean his indifference to peril, his capacity of determined labour, his triumph over forces whose antagonism would leave most landmen helpless and hopeless. Such was the story of the *Caledonia*, a prize crew from which took charge of the brig *Emily*, and, after ten days of fierce battling with violent gales of wind in a vessel jury-rigged and half full of water, were eventually forced to abandon her. Such was the voyage of five men in the derelict barque *Thor* of Tvedestrand, laden with scrap-iron and oil-casks; they had to rig a jury-rudder to get her to sail, and for nearly a fortnight struggled with heavy weather and baffling winds, eventually being shipwrecked near Youghal, and narrowly escaping with their lives only to witness the craft they had desperately laboured to save go to pieces among the rocks.

Not very long since a ship-rigged vessel of nine



hundred tons was proceeding on her voyage to one of the West India Islands. The weather had been calm and thick through the night, with a long swell rolling up from the westwards, and the morning broke with a fiery sun, red as that luminary is at his setting, and a mountainous heave of the sea that in the wake of the orb rolled in billows of molten gold, giving a kind of dreadful splendour to the hazy morning, with its faint and tarnished sky and the sickly green of the swelling and foamless deep, and the stubborn belt of haze that hung like the greyish shadow of rain upon the horizon, save where the sun loomed like a blood-red shield as he floated heavily out of the deep. There were a hundred signs to betoken a gale at hand, and preparatory measures were accordingly taken aboard the ship. All the light canvas and the mainsail were furled, and single reefs tied in the topsails. Never was such rolling. The draught of air had no weight to steady the vessel; she fell into the hollow of the swell, and from side to side she swayed as each ponderous liquid fold caught and hove her over, the water bursting inboard in smoke through her scupper-holes, the shrouds creaking with the tension of the strain as though they would draw the chain-plates like pliant wire, and every beam, strong fastening, and bulkhead added their groaning notes to the general clamour of the labouring hull and the beating canvas. By nine o'clock the sun had vanished under an expanse of slate-coloured cloud that hung over the whole surface of the deep; but yet another hour elapsed before the gale burst, and then it came along in a voice of thunder and over a surface of milk-white waters. With the upper topsail halliards let go and hands by the lower topsail sheets, the ship leaned down to it until the foam was up to a man's shoulders in the lee scuppers;

but they managed to get her to pay off, and presently she was speeding like an arrow on the wings of the tempest, piling the foam as high as her figure-head, her main-topsail blown in rags out of the bolt-ropes, and sheets of spray fogging her decks like bursts of vapour from a boiler.

The next thing to do was to bring her to the wind before the sea rose; the crew went aloft to stow the topsails and frap what remained of the main-topsail upon the yard; and after a little there was the ship with nothing on her but a small storm trysail, bowing and shearing at the huge surges which the storm had lifted in cones and pyramids, and which were now pouring and breaking with a terrible roaring noise. All day and far into the night the storm blew without intermission, but it broke in the middle watch, and then fined down so rapidly that at eight o'clock in the morning the ship was pursuing her course under whole topsails and topgallant-sails, and curtsying over the long heave of the sea, whose green seemed to sparkle after the purification of the tempest, and whose beautiful arching coils were brilliant with the diamond-like flashing of the foam chipped out of the emerald acclivities by the keen teeth of the clear, fresh north-east wind.

Shortly after noon the watch on deck had come out of the fore-castle after eating their dinner, when a small brig was made out right ahead, apparently standing athwart the ship's hawse. On approaching her it was seen that she was drifting, and that though there might be people aboard, she was not under control. Aloft she was in a state of great confusion, her foreyards squared, and her after-yards braced as wildly as the leeches of the canvas would allow. The davit falls were overhauled to the water's edge, and all the boats were gone.

Here and there ends of her running rigging trailed overboard, and as she rolled heavily in the trough of the sea, the sound of her flapping canvas threw a wild and melancholy echo athwart the breeze. The master of the ship loudly hailed her, and all eyes were eagerly fastened upon the brig to observe if there were any indications of life in her. Possibly nothing so heightens the mournful and tragical suggestions of an abandoned vessel as the loud hail of a passing ship and the deathlike stillness following, unbroken save by the hollow beating of canvas, the drowning sob of swelling water, and the creak of straining timbers.

It was very evident that nothing alive was in the brig, and the master of the ship, after consulting with his mate, decided on sending a boat. Accordingly, the second mate and a couple of seamen went over the side, and, after some hard rowing and careful dodging of the seas, they gained the brig, and scrambled upon her deck. They found that she was damaged to an extent that could not be imagined by inspection of her from the ship. Her galley and cabin skylights were smashed in, bulwark stanchions were started, and, in addition to various other injuries, there were three feet of water in the hold. Whether she had drained this water into her from the deck or whether it was due to a leak could not at once be ascertained; it was certain at least that her hold was full of cargo, and that it was of a nature that would not enable her to float should the water gain upon her. These facts were reported by the second mate, who added that he could find no papers belonging to the vessel, and that she had been stripped of all her provisions.

"It seems a pity to leave her knocking about here," shouted the captain. "It'll be another man's job if we

don't tackle it. Do you see your way to carry her to Fayal?" then distant about four hundred miles.

The second mate conversed with the two men who were with him, and, after a little while, called out, "Ay, we'll risk it."

On this the two seamen were ordered to come alongside, when some provisions, water, a sextant, chart, and other needful articles were lowered into the boat. With these they put off, receiving a loud encouraging cheer from the rest of the ship's crew; and, reaching the brig's side, hoisted out the provisions, and hooked on the boat and dragged her up to the davits. The ship stood by for awhile, watching the plucky fellows, and perhaps suspecting that they might repent their undertaking, for even with a dry bottom the brig might have been reckoned a big navigating job for three men. She rolled heavily and continuously, her canvas striking the masts with loud reports, and making the light spars buckle, and as she lifted her shining sides out of the bright green seas the water was seen to gush from her bulwarks in a manner to prove the wrenching they had undergone from the recent tempest. There was no show of misgiving or repentance, however, on the part of the men. Having hoisted their boat they turned to and trimmed the yards, clapping the jigger on to the topsail halliards, and giving everything a good spread. The little vessel took the wind, slightly heeled, and came round to her course for the Western Islands, and the last thing the ship, as she filled and stood on her voyage, saw of the brig was the second mate at the wheel, the two men toiling at the break-pump amidships, and the little vessel under fore and main topgallant sail heavily swinging over the long ocean swell, throwing the foam from her deep round bows, and looking but the merest toy amid the vast

kept fine, and this supported the men's courage, as did also their assurance one to another that they were bound to be well rewarded for the risks they were running. They had another spell at the pump, and then fetched a bit of the ship's beef that had been put to cook in the galley-copper, and bringing it aft with some biscuit, made out a tolerable meal, the mate steering with one hand and eating with the other.

The day passed quietly, but the wind was light, and the progress made was small. The duty of keeping the pump going at regular intervals grew exhausting, but it was absolutely necessary that the quantity of water should be kept under the depth found in the brig when she was boarded, and every hour throughout the day the harsh clank of the pump might be heard, ceasing after an interval when the men, pale with fatigue, and with the sweat streaming from their faces, flung themselves upon the deck breathless and spent. The breeze freshened at sunset, and the topgallant-sails were taken in. The night came down very dark, with a few misty stars here and there, and a flavour in the swing of the wind as it blew in gusts over the bulwarks that was a promise of bad weather. The weight of the water in the little vessel, coupled with the cargo, that came flush with the main hatch, sunk her deep, and as the sea rose her behaviour grew wild. The billows tumbled against her weather-bow, and such was her inelasticity that at times she would not rise to them, but let them roll over her forecastle, burying herself pretty nearly as far aft as her foremast, and flooding her decks to the wheel. Fortunately her upper works were staunch, or she must have been drowned again and again by the seas which tumbled in tons' weight over her head. The men made shift to stow the upper topsails before it came on hard,

but they could do nothing with the lower canvas, which must blow away if it would not stand. This the fore-top-sail did shortly after ten o'clock in a squall of wind; the weather sheet parted, and in a few moments the sail was in rags, increasing the roaring noise of the gale and the crashing sound of the sea by the fierce whipping of the tattered cloths. Amidst all this confusion and wild scene of the black heavens and glimmering heights of water, the men betook themselves again and again to the pumps, and the metallic ring of the working brake flung a dismal note of shipwreck into the harsh uproar of the warring elements. It is difficult to realize a sterner picture of struggle, a more furious array of perils. Here were three men as crew of a vessel which wanted a good nine hands to work her, exhausted by pumping, and yet obliged regularly to apply themselves to the pump to keep the vessel afloat—forced by this work, or by having to tend the helm, to remain unsheltered upon the decks over which the seas were bursting in whole oceans; wet through to the skin, without the means of obtaining a warm drink, and without the chance of preserving a dry stitch even were an opportunity afforded them to change their clothes; a black and howling void overhead, and below a huge broken sea, in whose thunderous hollows the little vessel laboured like a drowning thing, one moment upright and becalmed by the towering coil of a rushing surge, the next on her beam-ends on the summit of the liquid height, with the full force of the gale howling through her rigging, and the spray from the breaking heads of the near combers sweeping over her decks upon the breath of the black and ringing wind like a furious snowstorm.

In the limits assigned here it is impossible to do justice to this struggle. To make it a conceivable thing

to the landsman's intelligence something of photographic minuteness is wanted in the reproduction; the picture of the men leaving the pumps and crawling along the deck to the wheel, their talk, their postures as they sat crouching and listening to the infernal din in the ebony void on high—a hundred such matters, indeed—together with the outline of the vessel, revealed for a breathless space, as she swooped into a trough with a headlong shearing of the bows that made the water boil in whiteness which flung a kind of twilight round about, in which the ink-like configuration of the straining and beaten fabric was thrown up as though a gleam of pallid moonshine had broken through the dense vapours of the storm and fallen for an instant into the swirling and creaming hollow in which the brig lay weltering. That the deeply-laden and half-drowned vessel should have outlived that night was a real miracle. Fierce as had been the preceding storm encountered by the ship, this gale had at times an edge in it that the other wanted. Happily, like its predecessor, it was short-lived, and blew itself out soon after day-break, though it left such a tremendous sea behind that for several hours after the wind had sobered down into a topgallant breeze the brig was in the utmost jeopardy. The rolling was so frightful that the men could do nothing aloft. The mate refused to allow them to leave the deck, expecting every instant to see the mast go over the side. It was almost impossible to stand at the pumps; sometimes the little vessel would literally *dish* a sea over her rail that swept the two seamen off their legs, and forced the mate, who grasped the wheel, to hold on to the spokes for dear life; and it was as much as their necks were worth to let go for a moment. By noon, however, the swell had greatly subsided, and the men made shift to set the main and upper fore-topsails and

topgallant-sails, and to board the foretack. The mate also got an observation which enabled him to set his course. But the night that was passed had almost done for them; they could scarcely stand, and crawled about like sick men; and such was their pass that when the mate, laying hold of the pump, sung out to one of his companions to come and lend him a hand, the reply was that if the pumping was to depend upon *him*, the blooming hooker might as well sink at once, as there was not strength enough left in him to kill a flea; and it was not until the mate and the other man who stood at the wheel had consumed twenty minutes in entreaties, curses, and other marine rhetoric, that the exhausted creature was induced to "tail on." Fortunately for the poor fellows the wind had shifted into a quarter favourable for their voyage; they dried their clothes, cooked some beef, and managed to snatch sufficient rest between the intervals of pumping to give them back something of their strength. Everything went on well until they were about forty miles distant from Fayal, when the wind backed and blew a fresh breeze right ahead. This was maddening enough. They braced the yards hard up, packed all that they could hoist upon the vessel, and swore that, come what might, they would not slacken a halliard nor touch a sheet though it should blow fit to prize the old butter-box out of the water. It was not long after this that a steamer hove in sight, and, probably suspecting a case of distress by the look of the brig aloft—for the rags of the lower fore-topsail still fluttered upon the yard—slowed her engines to speak the little vessel. "What ship is that?" was asked. The name was given and the circumstances related. The steamer then offered to give the brig a drag towards Fayal, but when it was understood that a share in the salvage



would be expected. the second mate sung out no, they wanted no help, they had scraped through it all right so far, and were willing to venture the remaining risks. Thereupon the steamer proceeded, but had not sunk her hull when the wind again shifted, and enabled the brig to look up for her port with the breeze full abeam; and within nine hours from the time of having been spoken by the steamer, a pilot had boarded her, and she was safely moored at the west end of Fayal Bay. The value of the brig and cargo proved to be sixteen hundred pounds, and when the award came to be made, four hundred pounds were given to the owners of the ship that had boarded the brig, one hundred pounds to the master and crew of the ship, and a substantial sum to the second mate and his two men.

## A CHANNEL INCIDENT.

THE captains of the steamers which ply as passenger and cargo vessels between London and the French ports are a class of men familiar in a more or less degree to most of us, and it is probably this familiarity that prevents us from dwelling, with the emphasis that is deserved, upon the singular skill they exhibit, day after day, and year after year, in carrying their ships through what may be fairly called the most dangerous waters in the world, with scarcely a misadventure to vary the chronicles of their little voyages. By night and by day they are threading the intricacies of the crowded river Thames, groping through white mists so thick that a buoy must be alongside before it can be seen; struggling against sudden bursts of furious Channel weather, which bring up the most abominable kind of sea that a sailor can tumble about in—short, roaring cross surges which seem to knock the very breath out of the paddle steamer, sloping her funnel like the *bâton* in the hand of a band conductor, submerging one paddle-wheel to let the other revolve like a windmill out of water, and blowing up in storms of snow from the sponsons, whilst the worried vessel pitches savagely into the narrow hollows, flinging up her stern like the hind legs of a colt that takes fright at a passing train, her tarpaulins streaming with wet,

the escape-pipe blowing as she reels, a few sea-sick passengers wet through aft, two or three seamen in oilskins dodging the seas forward, and the skipper on the bridge holding on to the rail with both hands, and wondering what that confounded old "Geordie" right ahead is up to, coming along with square yards and his patched boom-foresail bellying out like a sailor's shirt drying in the forestay, as if the whole of the Channel were his private property, and it was his duty to run over anything that got in his road.

Take the trip to Boulogne alone. In fine, clear weather it is all plain sailing, no doubt. But if a passenger wants to appraise the merits of these captains rightly, let him quit the pitch-dark deck, and a night so black and thick that it is a positive relief to the eye when a shower of sparks breaks out of the funnel and blows away into the ebony gloom to leeward, and go below into the bright, warm cabin, and overhaul a chart of the mouth of the Thames and the adjacent waters as far as the South Sands Head Light. Why, the sight is bewildered by the mere look of that chart. It is as though a spider had got foul of an ink bottle, and had been cleaning its legs on a large sheet of white paper. West and East Girdlers, Margate Sands, Long Sands, Sunk Sands, Goodwin Sands—it seems to be all sand; whilst the soundings are more alarming still—eleven fathoms here, and close against it, one fathom—the English of which is blue lights, rockets, hovellers, life-boats, and Board-of-Trade inquiries. Jones, asleep in his little state cabin, knows nothing of the maze of perils through which he is being steered; he will rise in the morning and take his seat at the breakfast-table, and in the composed features of the brown-faced, hearty-looking captain who sits modestly eating a rasher of

bacon, he will find no trace or hint of a vigil which began at London Bridge and which will not terminate until Boulogne is reached, though perhaps—the Goodwins being astern, and neither the Varne nor the Ridge being very much in the road—the hardest part of it may be said to be over.

But the dangers of the English Channel are by no means limited to shoals and foul weather. If those were all, the captains who safely carry hundreds upon hundreds of passengers to and fro in the course of the year, would have to abate something of the praise to which their excellent skill and remarkable vigilance entitle them. In truth, a danger more to be feared than shallow water and tempestuous weather is collision. I am not speaking of the daytime and fine weather; though even in the daytime and in fine weather collisions at sea will happen through a dozen circumstances more absolutely unavoidable than the most apparently unavoidable railway collision ever attributed by a coroner's jury to pure accident. It is the thick and silent night that is most haunted by this deadly peril. There is no wind, but a drenching drizzle drops unseen, save in the haze of the cabin skylight, from a black heaven that seems to rest its ponderous burden on the slender mastheads of the creeping steamer. It is the English Channel, the great maritime highway that leads to all parts of the world, and now as ever it is crowded with shipping; and through this mighty shadow, full of hidden life and hidden danger, those captains I am writing of must bring their vessels, day after day, week after week. They must not lag, for time is precious to their owners. Their unscathed emergence year after year must surely savour of the miraculous to any man who will but give his mind to the character of the

dangers through which these sailors steer their vessels in safety. As a sample of this particular peril of collision, let me give an instance—a recent one. It may remove reference from all risk of misapprehension if I say at once that the steamer was from Bilbao, bound to a North country port.

She was abreast of Beachy Head when the night fell, and the fresh southerly wind, suddenly shifting to the westward in a little squall, dropped. During the latter portion of the afternoon the weather had been slowly thickening, but when the wind went the haze rolled up all round like smoke, blackening the moonless night until the very foam breaking away from under the counter was a scarcely perceptible glimmer upon the inky surface that melted into the midnight void within a biscuit's throw from the vessel's side. There were a few passengers, who vanished with the daylight and might be seen, by peering through the cloudy skylight glass, seated at the cabin table, the lamplight bright upon them, and making the picture of the irradiated interior, by contrast with the breathless blackness on deck, like a magic-lantern show. There was no gleam of phosphorus, no pallid streak of foam, to define the presence of the deep; but the soft seething of the passing froth, resembling the escape of steam heard thinly and at a long distance, filled the ear with a permanent note, and the dull vibration of the engines could be lightly felt. The haze was as wetting as rain; and the bullseyes over the lighted interior glimmered like emeralds in the decks upon which the mist was crawling as the vessel carried it along. There is a mystery in the hushed blackness of a night like this at sea which may be enjoyed in the open ocean, where the imagination lets itself loose upon the hidden leagues of

waters, and finds a kind of life in death in the mere capacity of sentience amidst such a universe of shadow; but it comes with an element of fear in a narrow sea studded with quicksands and alive with vessels. The eye struggles with the darkness in vain. Every instinct sympathizes with the blindness that has fallen upon you; but the strained ear catches no more than the sob and fret of passing water and the chafing of gear as the vessel sways upon the indistinguishable folds of the swell. A man coming up out of the cabin of that steamer might have reckoned the vessel deserted and left to her own guidance. The wheel was amidships, and there was no familiar binnacle-lamp to relieve with its soft mist of light the eye that strove to pierce the darkness off. To know where the captain was, or whether there were any hands on the look-out, it would have been necessary to sing out or go about the decks and upon the bridge groping.

Presently, what looked to be a composant—a small trembling point of light—hovered in the blackness on the starboard bow, and a moment after there crept out under it a dull green smudge, as faint and baffling in the thickness as the wavering flame of spirits of wine. A steamer's lights; but all that was visible of her was a deeper darkness in the air where she loomed, a row of illuminated scuttles like the beach-lamps of a little town seen afar, and fibres of radiance striking into the foggy air from the bright light on the fore-mast. A deeper fold of darkness seemed to overlap the night as the invisible steamship swept by; the pulsing of her engines thinned down, and the wash of the bow-wave melted into the vague, haunting undertone of chafing water—a sound coming you know not from where. On a sudden the decks rang with a loud and fearful cry,

"There's a vessel right ahead! Hard-a-port! Hard-a-port! mind, or we shall be into her!" Crash! You could hear the sound of splintering wood, followed by a whole chorus of shrieks, whilst a dozen orders were volleyed out in hoarse notes on the steamer's decks. "What is it?" "Where is she?" "Get some lights along, in God's name!" A bright red flame threw out a wild radiance over the steamer's side: there was a rush of men to see what it was, and there, gliding past the steamer, every outline distorted by the crimson, flickering, streaming fires of a flare-tin held on high by one of her men, was a French three-masted smack, her decks apparently full of people, shrieking altogether, and in every conceivable posture of entreaty and terror—a dreadful picture indeed, standing out with terrible distinctness in the red light of the flare against the liquid pitch of the sea and the sky. Their shouts and cries were in the rudest *patois*; it was impossible to distinguish their meaning amidst the hubbub on the maimed and broken hull, as it veered swiftly astern, the mainmast over the side, the wild light flashing up the crowd of white faces as the flame from the tin broke out in a blood-red fork of radiance, and the whole fearful picture vanishing as the light suddenly expired, and the night rolled its inky tide over it. The steamer's engines were instantly reversed and the iron fabric stopped. The passengers came rushing up out of the cabin, increasing the distraction of the darkness by their eager, terrified inquiries to know what had happened. The chorus of shrieks astern was silenced, and only faint, single, most melancholy shouts broke the terrible silence upon the sea, proving but too conclusively that the vessel had foundered, and that these cries came from swimmers.

Meanwhile every lamp and lantern aboard the steamer that could be collected had been brought on deck, and you could see the dark figures of seamen struggling to get the boats overboard, rushing aft, and vociferating promises of speedy help into the blackness astern, some bending on lanterns to ropes' ends, and letting them drop over the side, and flinging ends of line overboard for the clutch of such swimmers as should reach the steamer; whilst the cries of the captain and mates and the shouts of the crew were made deafening by the pouring and hissing of steam up in the blackness overhead. It always seems an eternity at times like this before the boats are overboard; something gets foul; the oars have been taken forward to be scraped, and cannot be found; a kink in the fall has jammed in the davit-block; there is no plug, and a dozen voices are shouting all at once for something to take its place. But two boats at last were launched, after an interval of about five minutes, and pulled slowly away for the spot where the smack had foundered, a hand in each bow holding a lantern and keeping a bright look-out for those black spots which should denote the heads of swimmers and drowning men. A silence as of death fell upon the steamship as her boats left her. A crowd of people stood in the stern watching the two spots of light upon the water, breathlessly listening for any sound that should indicate the rescue of even one man. The lanterns over the side flung a short space of radiance upon the sea, and men were posted along the rail to watch for any approaching swimmer who should have been missed by the boats.

"Are you finding any of them?" bawled the captain of the steamer, sending his voice in a roar through the hollow of his hands.



"Ay, ay, we're picking them up," came back the answer in the merest thread of sound.

Ten minutes went by, and then suddenly there arose a shout from one of the men stationed at the port bulwarks.

"Here's a man swimming here!" and in a breath there was a rush to the side.

"Get another light over!"

"Fling him this life-buoy!"

"Pitch a coil of rope to him, but mind you don't hit his head, or you'll sink him!"

Half a dozen splashes told that these various orders had been executed. "He's got hold of my line!" sang out a voice, and as the rope was gently hauled in, a seaman, jumping into the bight of a rope, sprang overboard, and in a few moments both men were dragged over the side.

The half-drowned French smacksman fell down in a heap the instant he touched the deck. He was dressed in heavy sea-boots and oilskin leggings, and how he had managed to swim the distance from where his vessel had foundered to the steamer was a miracle not to be explained by any known law of specific gravity. He was carried into the forecastle, unable to articulate; but another quarter of an hour went by before the boats returned.

"How many have you?" shouted the captain, as they approached.

"We have four, and the other boat has five. There are women among 'em," was the answer.

They came alongside, and one by one the poor creatures were handed up. There were three women, dressed in the picturesque costume of the Boulogne fish-wife, but dragged, streaming, with closed eyes, and a

quick, suffocating breathing, half dead. Most of the others were in the last stage of exhaustion; but one was able to speak, and as he stood a moment in the lantern-light answering the captain's questions, a more moving object could not be imagined. The water drained from his fingers, his hat was gone, and his iron-grey hair—for he was an old man—lay in a tangled mass over his eyes; and there was a most heartrending expression of horror and despair in his face.

He said his vessel had left Boulogne early that morning. There were four women and ten men and boys on board. He owned that they had had no lights burning. He trembled like a freezing man, and was then led below, with his hands to his face, sobbing as if his heart would break, and moaning in his rude French that amongst the drowned were his wife and boy.

"Are you sure there were no others afloat when you came away?" asked the captain of the mate, who had charge of the boats. "One man swam to us, I must tell you, and we have him aboard."

"Sure, sir," was the answer. "We pulled round and round, but there was nothing to be seen. The people were saved by the mainmast that was left afloat when the smack went down. Those who were drowned missed it, otherwise it was big enough to keep all of them up."

For another twenty minutes the captain lingered, peering into the darkness, and keeping one boat overboard ready for the first sound. But the deep was as silent as the tomb, and nothing disturbed the deathlike stillness, unless it were the murmur of the men forward talking over the tragical incident, and the quick, passionate whispers of the passengers, as one would suddenly say, "Hush! what was that?" and another,

"See! is not that something moving out yonder?" Nothing more could be done. Very reluctantly the captain quitted the stern of his vessel and gave orders to get the boat on board, and in a little while the steamer was slowly moving again through the blackness, her decks wrapped in darkness and silence, whilst the haze floated like steam round the masthead light, and the water gurgled like the cry of a drowning man as it eddied round under the counter and went away in a pale glimmer of froth into the midnight gloom astern.

This little incident will, I believe, fairly set before the reader one of the perils against which those particular captains to whom I referred in the beginning of this article have to contend. Here is a fishing-smack, lying becalmed, without a light showing, on a night made pitch dark by a drizzling haze. How could such a collision be averted, short of the captain of the steamer bringing up?—a remedy which his owners most assuredly would not think the better of him for adopting. I repeat that having regard to the difficult navigation of the mouth of the Thames, as far south as the southern limb of the Goodwins, to the mass of shipping of all kinds that is always crowding these waters, to the perilous weather to be found there, and to the negligence, foolhardiness, and indifference which are characteristic of the seamanship of scores of the men—English as well as foreigners—who have charge of small craft navigating that sea, the manner in which the masters I am speaking of carry their steamers from port to port, year after year, showing always the same clean bill of health, implies an amount of skill and vigilance which any one acquainted with the navigation and dangers of the English Channel from the Nore to the Bullock Bank will own cannot be too highly praised.

## LOSS OF A SMACK'S CREW.

I FELL once into conversation with a smack-boy—a Yorkshire lad—who told me a story which I privately declined to believe until I saw the printed report of the inquest, and had confirmation of his narrative from other hands. Men who go to sea meet with strange accidents, and perish through causes which landsmen would ridicule as impossibilities in marine novels; but seldom do a vessel's crew encounter such a disaster as that which befell the people of the smack *Apostle*, of Hull. I wish I could tell the story as the fishing apprentice gave it me. No painter could imagine a finer study than the figure of the lad in his blue knitted overall, his big boots, his sou'-wester, the hinder thatch of which forked out from the back of his head like the tail of a gull on the wing, his young face as he talked warming up into a kind of passionate awe and fear, as it might in his sleep when the dreadful circumstance stood out in the sharp configuration of a dream; whilst now and again he would pass the back of his rough hand across his forehead to rub off the gout of sweat which gathered there. However, I can do no more than translate the lad's yarn, and make it complete, in its way, by facts I got from others. The *Apostle*, then, was a smack, belonging to Hull. Will Stevenson was her master, and John Butler her

mate. Besides these she carried two other men and a boy—the lad who told me the story—making in all five souls. She left Hull, however, with only four men, for the boy did not join her until she had been out cruising a week, when he was sent to her in a steamer.

Life on board a smack is but a dull affair, and such excitements as it has are all against the fisherman. It is tedious work drifting for hours with the trawl overboard; but what is to be made of it when, as sometimes happens, the trawl is got aboard and the net found torn to pieces by a piece of sunken wreck or something of that kind, and all the fish gone? Or take a gale of wind blowing for a week, keeping the fisherman waiting and waiting for a spell of moderate weather to fetch his ground. To be hove-to in a smack in the North Sea is such a dance as you must endure—not for a day, but for several days together—to understand. Who that has rolled in a big steamer across the tempestuous stretch of waters which wash our eastern coasts has not watched from the reeling, spray-swept deck the spectacle of some dandy or cutter-rigged boat, jumping as if by magic into the arena of the green, pelting, and foaming amphitheatre, with her storm jib-sheet to windward or well amidships, a slender band of dark, close-reefed mainsail tearing at the quivering gaff, whilst she tosses the high spring of her bows at the rushing snow of the surges, chopping sharply down into the livid vortex and making it flash up in white spume that smothers her like the smoking spray of a great waterfall, vanishing until her gaff is hidden, and nothing shows but the jerking vane at the masthead behind the glittering ridge of the sea that runs at her with the roar of a goods train sweeping through a tunnel; and then springing afresh to the height of the thunderous surge until some fathoms of

her keel forward are exposed, and leaning down upon the slope of the mountainous wave, and under the giant pressure of the ringing gale, until her mast seems parallel with the water and her dark shred of canvas a mere black patch upon the snow-storm under her ?

One wonders, looking at such a sight, how the big-booted fellows aboard of her hold on ; how they manage to cook their food ; by what inconceivable art they contrive to " fetch " their bunks, or sleeping closets, without numerous ineffectual struggles, first of all, to hit the holes. But, in truth, no class of sailors make less trouble of dirty weather than fishermen. With his tiller securely lashed, the storm jib slatting a moment or two as the reefed mainsail swings the little craft into the wind, then shoving her nose round again as the sea runs hissing away under her, the air forward dark with flying foam and the water draining overboard in bucketfuls with every send, the smacksman sits cosily in the companion, pipe in mouth, keeping one eye on the lookout and the other eye on the time when one of his mates shall come and take his place, and send him below to toast his hands at the little stove, whose ruddy glow pleasantly tinges the darksome twilight of the cabin, and enables him to find, without groping, another pipe of tobacco before he lies down.

Daybreak on Friday, the *Apostle* being then very nearly five weeks out from Hull, found the smack with her trawl over the weather quarter and near the north-east end of the Dogger Bank. There was a fresh breeze blowing and a middling sea running, and the smack, surging to leeward with the trend of the waves, rose and fell with the regularity of a pendulum. Many miles distant to windward was another smack, apparently heading for the same ground over which the *Apostle* was

dragging her trawl ; otherwise the sea was vacant, and the greenish dawn, flinging a sickly tint into the sky, but leaving the water dark by contrast, and throwing up the great circle of the horizon until the ocean resembled a black and solid disc centring the huge concavity of the heavens, made the immediate aspect of the deep indescribably wild and melancholy. Indeed, there is not a more desolate scene in the world than daybreak at sea. The shadow of the night still hangs in folds upon the water, and the dim illumination in the east only serves to accentuate the chilly sullenness and grim bleakness bequeathed by the black hours, the last of which is drawing away in gloom into the west. But the sun is a noble magician, and one stroke of his flashing wand converts the mystery of the dawn's vague hints into a glorious revelation of blue heights and sparkling waters. The *Apostle's* trawl had been over all night, but a further short spell of drifting could do no harm, and might furnish out another trunk of fish, and the interval would give them time to get breakfast. So the little fire in the stove was stirred into a good blaze, the coffee boiled, and the two men at rest in their bunks routed out for the meal. Fishermen are usually well fed, and that is one reason, I suppose, why they appear to relish their food in a manner you shall not find in any fore-castle. They have generally a good freight of fish to pick from, and they are not slow to boil a cod or cook a big sole when fancy and appetite prompt them. Somehow or other, to me, the smoke that comes blowing away out of the little chimneys which pierce their decks always says of good cheer, and I was not at all surprised, on looking over some victualling accounts shown me by a smack-owner, to discover that the fishermen's sea-larders—many of them, certainly—are stocked with a

Liberality that must make owners very anxious indeed to know how much fish there is aboard, when their vessel's number or burgee comes within reach of their telescopes.

Breakfast done, the master gave orders for the trawl to be got in, and all hands tumbled up on deck to help at one of the few heavy jobs which happen aboard fishing-smacks. I have already said there was a fresh breeze blowing, and the vessel, though hove-to with her jib-sheet to windward, leaned down freely under the weight of the reefed mainsail. The sea was regular, but ran quickly, and every lift of the surges helped the wind to lay the little craft along, until at times her lee gunwale was flush with the water; but, like all boats of her class, she would right with great vehemence, jumping to windward like a goaded creature of instinct, and making the decks, slippery with wet, extremely dangerous even to practised feet. They say that a fisherman's walk is two steps and overboard, and any one would have thought the saying a true one who had seen this jumping bit of a fabric—sparking like a shrimp in and out of the hollows of the tumbling waters—and watched those big-booted, clumsily-moving, powerfully-built men striding about the decks and making ready to drag the great trawl in.

The process is very simple. The dandy-wink is manned, the beam secured, and the net is then dragged in over the side. The *Apostle's* men had succeeded in getting in the net to the cod-end, as it is called. ~~At~~ **Five** hands were employed on this job, as it is one that demands the united strength of such little companies as smacks carry. They leaned over the rail to grasp the net, but the vessel at that moment burying her lee side through the lift of an unusually heavy sea, one of the



men lost his balance and went overboard, and the net bellying out and sending away as the vessel rolled to windward, in the twinkling of an eye the other three men whose hands grasped the meshes were torn clean over the beam and buried in the sea alongside, leaving only the boy on deck. It was done in a breath. There was no time even to raise a shriek. One moment there were all four men leaning over the side, the net securely inwreathed about their fingers and waiting for the signal from the master to drag together; the next they were floundering in the water alongside, struggling, desperately clutching at the sinking net, and drowning. There was a portion of the net on deck, and to this the boy—who preserved an heroic presence of mind in the midst of this appallingly sudden and dreadful disaster—clung, that the men might not drag it all overboard (and so have nothing to hold by) in their wild and overhand grasping at the deadly, deceptive meshes which floated and sank under them, and clogged the free action of their limbs, and clung to them like masses of seaweed, settling them lower and lower as new folds of it were swept by the water around them. The net being to leeward, the tendency of every sea was to belly it out and increase its weight, whilst also setting the whole mass of it further and further away from the vessel's side; but this weight was beyond description increased by the men who battled with the fury of strong dying creatures in the deadly envelopment of the trawl. Every now and again a sea would break under the vessel and bury the poor fellows in foam; and then, as the smack swept down into the hollow and leaned heavily to windward, the drag of the hull upon the net would strike it up again, and the four smacksmen would reappear with dusky despairing faces, their eyes pro-

truding as they strained for breath. Robust as the boy was, here was a conflict it was impossible for him long to engage in. He held to the net with as manly and resolute a heart as ever an English lad brought to a struggle for life; but the weight of the bellying net and of the men clinging to it, increased as it was tenfold at times by the swing and rush of the smack upon the sea, must have taxed and presently exhausted the strength of a dozen such as he; gradually as he failed the net was torn foot by foot away from him, though every time it was wrenched from his hand he grabbed at it again, and held on with clenched teeth until another swoop would unlock his fingers as you might snap a clay pipe-stem.

Suddenly turning his head—for hitherto he had been engrossed by the dreadful struggle in the water just a fathom or two away beyond him—he spied the smack that had been sighted at dawn, about half a mile to windward. She was manifestly heading for the *Apostle*, and the boy shouted to the miserable drowning men that help was coming, and urged them to hold on. But it was doubtful whether they heard the lad's voice. Close upon the water the seething and hissing of foam would be deafening; moreover, their eyes were glazing—death had his hand on their throats; they presented a row of asphyxiated faces, now and again revolving in the eddies amid the trawling gear, sometimes thrown up until their bodies as high as the waists were out of the water, in which posture they would remain poised with uplifted arms that gave them a horrible appearance of entreaty, then vanishing utterly, to emerge a few seconds after as the roll of the vessel swung them up and out. The boy's strength was now completely exhausted, and also he had to let go in order to signal to the approaching smack. The whole of the net then went overboard.

About an hour had passed since the men had fallen into the sea, during all which time this most shocking tragedy was being enacted, whilst the boy with magnificent courage protracted his shipmates' lives by maintaining his hold of the net. But the moment he let go the net veered out to its full sweep, and an instant after one of the men sank and rose no more. The smack was now within hail. The boy rushed to the weather side, and shouted out the dreadful story with such strength as remained in him, at the same pointing frantically at the water where the drowning men were. The dreadful scene was by this time visible to the crew of the vessel, which proved to be a Yarmouth smack called the *Esther*. They tumbled their boat over the side; a couple of hands jumped into her and rowed at once for the perishing fishermen. The boy ran back to the lee side of his vessel to encourage the poor creatures, but, looking, he discovered that the third man was gone; the master and mate only were to be seen, both clinging to the gear and scarcely living. The little boat—hardly better than a walnutshell in such a sea—came along fast; but before she could come up to the master, he let go his hold and floated away, face down and arms hanging lifeless, upon a running wave. A few strokes of the oars, however, brought the rescuers abreast of him, and he was seized and lifted into the boat, which then returned and took off the mate from the gear, to which he clung like a mass of black seaweed torn from the rocks. Calling out to the boy that they would see to him presently, the Yarmouth fishermen rowed back to the *Esther* with their dreadful freight, but when they came to hand the men up over the side they found that the master was dead. The mate was carried below, stripped and dried before the cabin stove, then wrapped

in rugs and laid in a bunk. But he was little more than a corpse when rescued, and the skipper of the *Esther*, going presently to see how the poor fellow fared, found that he had expired. This was the last of the four seamen who a couple of hours before were full of life and hope and heartiness. Meanwhile the master of the *Esther* had sent three of his men aboard the *Apostle*, and two days after the disaster both vessels arrived at Yarmouth.

I know not how this simple little narrative may affect others, but the relation of it moved me deeply. That four English sailors should meet with death so unexpected, so full of anguish in its protraction, so bitterly cruel throughout a long, long hour's suffering, is perhaps significant only as another illustration of the perils of the deep. It is just one of the brief and simple annals of the poor sailor. But I cannot but think that the behaviour of that young apprentice—named Frederick John Graham—makes it worthy of record. Those who have any acquaintance with English fishermen are only too painfully well aware that the relations between owners and apprentices are by no means of a cordial kind, and in several places I hear of the clergy and others taking up the cause of these boys, and asking the public for funds to help to give them homes and to educate them into some knowledge of religion and morality, and out of the deplorable ignorance in which they are suffered to live. I am well aware that some apprentices are decidedly trials to smack-owners. They will run away with their master's clothes. They will refuse to go to sea in the hope of being taken before a magistrate and sent to prison instead. But, nevertheless, I cannot quite satisfy myself that smack-owners—taking them as a body, granting

many exceptions—treat their apprentices with the consideration that even the most hard-worked and ill-paid servants in other walks of life expect and extract from their masters. One does not want them to act the part of schoolmasters, and teach the boys to read and write; but upon what principle do they oppose the efforts of others who are willing to perform that duty? and why do they find something obnoxious in homes established to furnish smack apprentices with certain comforts and harmless recreations—calculated to keep the lads out of the streets when they come ashore from a voyage—which smack-owners themselves do not apparently see any reason for providing? For these and other reasons, therefore, the endurance and hearty English spirit of Graham may be thought a proper subject to hold up to applause; for, accepting the lad as a type, the public may witness enough merit in the hardly-used and laboriously-worked community to which he belongs to justify them in giving a helping hand to the humanitarians who are struggling to make the lives of the apprentices when ashore happy and useful to themselves; whilst the smack-owner will recognize in this narrative of Graham a spirit to which he is by no means unaccustomed, though he needs perhaps to have it more diligently emphasized than he has yet found it, before he will accept the hint it offers to his forbearance and to his humanity as the owner—in a most literal sense—of lads who, taking them all round, are the most friendless beings in the world, with the whole machinery of the law against them, and only here and there a few seaside dwellers to take their part by endeavouring to give some little wholesome sweetness to their existence when out of their vessels.

## FIRE AT SEA.

AN impressive story of the destruction by fire of a full-rigged American ship in the North Atlantic has been told me. Certain features of it combine to make it an incident certainly worthy a longer record than is usually devoted to maritime disasters, and altogether it yields such an idea of the horror of fire at sea as is not often to be got from stories of misfortunes of that kind.

A certain Wednesday in August found the *R. B. Fuller* a little over three weeks out on her voyage from Cardiff to Valparaiso. She was freighted with coal, and carried a crew of twenty hands, being indeed a ship of 1360 tons register. A vessel of that size, unless maimed by short fore and mizzen topgallant-masts, is sure to make a handsome picture on the water under full sail. The Americans rarely mutilate their ships, but, on the contrary, with sky-scrapers and moon sails, pile their canvas to the heavens, and, mixing plenty of cotton with their sail-cloth, carry a yacht-like whiteness aloft that will shine upon the horizon like a peak of ice brilliant with snow.

The weather had been fine all day, with a beam wind, and the deep, long, black-hulled ship, leaning under the weight of her cloths, slipped softly along her course over the trembling and flashing blue. What

witchery is there comparable to such sailing? No sense of delight that is born of freedom and movement surpasses the joyousness kindled in the spirits by the swift, smooth rushing of a lofty sailing-ship over the swelling bosom of a great ocean, all sky above, all sea below, and between, the music of the clear, glad breeze.

The sun sank and the night gathered, the wind fined down, and the American ship, with spars erect, floated over the dark waters, in which the starlight seemed to flake away in small coils of quicksilver. Over the side nothing could be heard but the tinkling of the ripples at the stem; aloft there was not a stir, unless it were now and again the muffled chafing of the foot of a sail upon a stay or the rattle of a reef-point upon the canvas. Forward all was in shadow, with the figure of a man on the look-out; whilst aft the mate on duty paced the deck, pausing sometimes to take a peep at the compass-card, where the binnacle-lamp glistened in the brass centre-bit of the wheel, and shone upon the face of the officer as he stooped to observe the indication of the card.

The captain, Mr. Thomas Peabody, had left the deck about three-quarters of an hour. He was asleep in his cabin, when, shortly after ten o'clock, he was awakened by a feeling of suffocation, and perceived that the cabin was full of smoke. Moreover, the atmosphere was charged with a deadly, nauseating, gaseous smell that gave an iron tightness to his throat and filled his body with an unendurable prickly sensation, as though strong mustard had been rubbed into his skin. He rushed on deck, where the fresh air at once revived him, and not immediately perceiving anybody about, shouted for the officer of the watch. The chief mate came running out of the darkness forward, and before Captain

Peabody could address him, cried out that the ship was on fire. The news spread as if by magic, and in a few moments the decks were alive with the crew hurrying out of the fore-castle.

Of all cries, none thrills through the heart of a sailor like that of fire. Human helplessness is never so felt as at such a time. The ship is a burning volcano, from whose cabin the red flames may soar presently, making a wide circumference of air scorching hot with a furious play of withering flame. The mate said that he believed the fire was in the hold under the cabin. Forthwith there was a rush to the hatches, which were immediately closed; calking-irons were fetched, and the air was busy with the hammering of mallets. It was a sight to see the men. There was no lack of determined courage among them, but the cry of "Fire!" was ringing in their ears, they toiled in quick impulsive rushes, with feverish haste, glancing to right and left, knowing not in what part of the ship the fire would first show itself in flame. Every ventilator was closed, and the cabin shut up, in the hope of stifling the fire, and the crew then gathered in a group in the waist to watch and wait and see what their work would do for them.

Presently somebody called out that the smoke was still breaking through.

"Look there—and there, sir!"

It was hard to guess how it could escape; the hatches were closed and calked, every aperture securely blocked, and yet there was the smoke breaking out from all parts of the vessel as steam rises from the compact earth. On this the carpenter's chest was overhauled, and by order of the captain the men fell to work to bore holes in the deck. As the solid planks were pierced the smoke belched forth in puffs, mingled with a pestilential



exhalation of gas that forced the seamen to work with averted faces. The pumps were then manned, the hose got along, buckets dropped over the side, and all hands turned to to drown the fire by discharging water into the glowing cargo. Clouds of steam came up through the holes, regularly followed, as the white vapour thinned, by spiral columns of black smoke which wound round and round to the height of the maintop, where the light breeze caught and arched them over. No flames were as yet visible, but the men knew that the ship was full of fire, that at any instant the hatches might be riven and shrivelled up by a discharge of flame, and therefore when the captain gave orders to lower the boats there was a rush to the davits.

When the boats were in the water alongside, the captain, desiring to save certain articles, called the mate and four seamen to accompany him to the cabin; but they had not been there a minute when they suddenly ran out, some of them vomiting blood, and all of them complaining that their heads were swelled so that they were like to burst. Indeed, but for their speedy flight, they must have dropped dead in an atmosphere that was rendered virulently poisonous by the combined gas and smoke. A short spell of rest and fresh air recovered the poor men, and the crew then proceeded to victual the boats with such provisions as they could come at. The mainyards were braced aback, and the men entered the boats and rowed to a distance of about half a mile from the vessel, where they remained.

It was a fine night, very calm, and the ship, with her mainyards aback, lay steady. Hour after hour went by, but no flame showed itself, though there was a gradual thickening of the smoke from the deck, and the seamen could observe it hanging in a shadow over the

mastheads of the vessel and to leeward of her. Gazing at her as she stood like a marble carving upon the dark sea, it was difficult for the men to realize that her hold was a concealed furnace; that by taking off one of the hatches and looking down they could have beheld an incandescent interior, a red-hot surface like a lake of fire, with blue and green flames crawling over it, and masses of smoke, repelled or consumed by the intense heat of the central spaces. But for the shadow overhanging her glimmering heights, there were no signs that anything was amiss with the ship. Surveyed from the low level of the boats, she looked a majestic fabric out there, a brave sight in the faint, fine starlight. It was a long, weary, and bitter vigil for the poor fellows to keep. They would not leave the neighbourhood of the vessel while she remained afloat. They could not tell what might happen. If she burst into flames the light she made might bring them help. Or the fire might die out and so give them their home to return to. Whilst she was there, she was, in a manner, something to hold on to; for it was a fearful thing to look away from her into the mystery of the darkness around, and to think of being left to struggle amid that black and fathomless desert of water in open boats, which brought the mighty deep within reach of their hands.

Slowly the long hours went by, and then the dawn came, and the sun uprose. With the first of the grey light every eye was turned upon the ship. They could see the shroud of smoke that overhung her, yet not a spark of fire had been visible throughout the night, and this, now that the sunshine was on the sea, begot a hope in the men that, though to be sure the smoke crawled thickly from the ship, the fire was not so bad as they had feared, and that a long and resolute struggle might

enable them to conquer it. Accordingly the oars were thrown over, and the boats headed for the vessel. The boat occupied by the captain was the first to get along-side. He jumped on board, and was followed by others; but the heat of the decks striking through his boots made him put his hand to the planks. It was like touching hot iron. He walked to the cabin, but on feeling the door he withdrew his fingers with a groan. The whole fabric was full of fiery heat; whatever touched the flesh gave it pain; the very ropes which lay coiled over the belaying pins were too hot to handle; the pitch was bubbling in the seams; the air between the bulwarks resembled the atmosphere of a furnace; in the haze of the heat every object seemed to revolve like a corkscrew; and the men in the boats said that feeling her side, even to the level of the water-line, was as bad as putting the hand upon a boiler full of steam.

A cry from one of the seamen who had come over the side in bare feet, raised a kind of panic among those already aboard. "Over with you," was the shout, "before she bursts into a blaze!" and in mad haste the poor fellows dropped over the bulwarks, seized their oars, and resumed the same distance from the ship that they had occupied all night.

Soon after this a small breeze of wind arose. It seemed to penetrate the vessel, for with the draught there soared up a thick body of smoke. Her passage to leeward was perceptible in the short, oil-smooth wake to windward of her; but the drift of the boats was the same as hers, so that the men had no need to use their oars to maintain their distance. There was now weight enough in the wind to blow the smoke clear of the decks before it rose a foot above the bulwarks, so that the picture of that full-rigged ship remained there in its

completeness. As the time passed the men would see a fountain of sparks hove up occasionally in the smoke. It was dismal work sitting and watching that fine ship smouldering. All that the men possessed was left aboard of her; they had come away, most of them, in their shirts and trousers, many without shoes, and there in those three boats they sat looking at the burning vessel, silent in the main, often glancing around them on the look-out for a sail, and holding on to the thwarts or gunwales as the boats jerked and toppled sharply about on the bit of a sea that the wind had raised. A little before noon those who had their eyes on the ship perceived the mizzenmast to sway to and fro a moment; then suddenly it fell with a crash; a rush of smoke, like a monstrous balloon, hovered over the quarter-deck and concealed the ruin; but it soared into the air, and sailed away on the wind under a sudden furious discharge of sparks, which resembled the explosion of a mass of rockets, and when the vapour had settled down it was seen that the mizzenmast was over the side, the vessel a wreck aft, whilst forward the sails were dusky and red, as though iron-stained, with the blowing of the sooty coils and the fire of the glowing sparks.

Until the night came down no further alteration took place in the appearance of the vessel. During all those long hours the men sat crouched in their boats, watching their burning ship and searching the sea for the help that did not come. The second night rolled down dark, with windy clouds drifting across the skies. Here and there the phosphorus shone in the curl of a breaking surge. The half-clad men shivered under the fresh night wind; but the ship whilst she stayed there was a beacon. If they quitted her, what was there to do? She was a dreadful signal upon the dark sea, and might yet bring

succour, and so they stayed. But the darkness had not gathered an hour when a tongue of red flame darted out of the deck abaft the mainmast. It threw out a great light, like the flash of a big gun, and the men could see one another's faces in it. It sank and seemed to expire, and then there rushed up a body of crimson sparks which clearly defined the dense and swelling volume of smoke that blotted out the heavens in the south-east; but speedily the flame swept aloft again like a serpent, wreathing itself around the mainmast; then forward and apparently out of the fore hatch sprang up another pillar of fire, and presently there were tongues and lances of flame crawling and hissing all over the doomed vessel, gliding in serpentine convolutions along her bulwarks, over her stern, around her bows, limning the configuration of her hull with burning pencils, filling whole leagues of the darkness with light. The stays, the shrouds, all the gear connected with the bowsprit and jibbooms, caught fire; the yards were kindled; the whole outline of the vessel, was scored in fire upon the night; every detail of the standing masts and yards and sails, the crosstrees, outriggers, and tops—all the furniture of the ship's decks, the boat-davits, the catheads, the maitingale, the spritsail yard, were expressed in flame. It was like the picture of a ship drawn in fire upon a black curtain. Not a sound came from the men in the boats. They watched breathless, full of amazement, thoughts of their serious position being overwhelmed by the dreadful but magnificent sight of that noble ship. When suddenly the burning vessel opened, a flame such as might go up from Vesuvius soared into the air, making a roaring noise upon the wind; there was a sound of the falling of the burning masts and yards; and then, in a breath, the whole terrific picture vanished; it

disappeared as you might blow out a candle; the boom of an explosion came dully up against the wind, and there was nothing but the stars and the black sea and a dense shadow in the south-east where the smoke from the foundered ship was heavily sailing away.

If ever loneliness was felt at sea it was felt by those men when that great light went out, and left them in darkness and dread and uncertainty. But enough if I say that after tossing about for two days and nights they sighted a sail to the westward, which they chased until they were sufficiently near for her people to see them. She proved to be the London brig *Paracca*, whose captain gladly received the poor fellows and treated them with the utmost humanity.

## *SEA-SICKNESS.*

MANY will remember the terrible description of Mr. Aaron Bang's pangs of sea-sickness in "Tom Cringle." It is fortunate that everybody whilst suffering from nausea is not so demonstrative as the West Indian planter. The horrors of a rough passage between Calais and Dover would be fearfully increased were the prostrate passengers to bewail amid their throes the wines and dishes which old Neptune exacts from them. And yet one has only to consider what kind of heaving sea it was that set the West Indian howling for brandy-and-water to commiserate the poor old epicure's noisy anguish. Sailors will appreciate the affect upon a passenger's stomach of a heavy gale of wind dropping as if by magic and leaving the sailing vessel—for Tom Cringle flourished before the days of steam—rolling upon a tremendous swell. A steamer whose screw or paddles are revolving and driving the hull through the water will not, amidst the heaviest sea, give you the same sensation you get from a vessel tumbling about on a strong, fine-weather swell, not a breath of air to steady her or give her way. The steamer in a measure escapes the worst of the seas by sliding out of them; her bows are lifting clear of the washing coil whilst her lee sponsons are buried, and she half jumps the intervening hollow as her paddles

thrust her from the summit of the surge. Often have I watched this behaviour in swift steamers, and seen them take a bow or beam sea as a horse takes a hurdle.

But the motion of a vessel becalmed amid a heavy swell is one of the most uncomfortable of all sea-experiences. Let the merest relic of nausea linger in the human breast, and this movement shall make a full-blown anguish of it. I have heard of stewards, men who have made a dozen voyages round the world—whose stomachs were as immovable in a gale of wind as the ship's figurehead;—I have heard of such men, I say, in a heavy breathless swell, tumbling down among their dishes too sick to stand, rolling about among the crockery and echoing with their groans the spasmodic gurgling of the water as it sobbed in the scupper-holes or washed up full, green, and sickening over the glass of the scuttles or the cabin windows.

This sort of tumblefication is fast becoming a thing of the past among passengers, very few of whom nowadays make their voyages in sailing ships, although it is by no means yet an extinct feature of the emigrant's progress from the old world to Australia and New Zealand. At such times as this the ship is as sea-sick as any of the yellow and haggard sufferers who moan in her cabins; squeaks and cries and the rumbling of a disordered internal organization resound in her hold. Over she leans like a fainting creature, and the bubbling wash of water alongside delivers a note full of nauseating suggestion; the beating of the canvas against the masts sends a shiver through the hull; down drops her counter amid a swirl of gurgling eddies, the stern-post complains, the rudder jars, the wheel chains harshly strain; and then up, slowly and giddily, mounts the after end of the staggering fabric,



making the pale and helpless holder-on there feel that his brains are descending into his boots, and that his bowels are rising to fill the emptiness of his skull, whilst sharp reports of crashing crockery break out through the skylights, the cask that has broken adrift on the main-deck rolls to and fro and defies the pursuit of the three or four seamen who dodge about after it and go sprawling over one another into the scuppers, the pigs under the long-boat scuffle and snort, chests and boxes fetch away in the cabins, the sailors flounder over the cable range as they stagger out of the galley with hook pots of tea in their hands, and the sea-blessings showered out by the cook as he chases his dishes and pans and burns his fingers in his efforts to save the cuddy dinner, can be heard by the man at the wheel and the youngster who is shifting the dog-vane at the main-royal masthead.

This, I say, was an old experience; but it was a time to try the stomach whilst it lasted. Think of three or four days and three or four nights of it! In these days if you are sea-sick you at least have the satisfaction of knowing that the ship is always going ahead, and that the day, if not the hour, when your nausea will have terminated may be pretty accurately fixed. And yet what man hanging over the side or prostrate on his back and execrating existence can get satisfaction out of the thought that, bad as his sufferings are, they might be worse by being protracted? I believe there are some people who, when once their heads are fairly over the rail, or when what Thackeray calls the "expectaroon" is between their knees, are inspired by such a loathing for life that they are not to be moved by the wildest threats of destruction. Once, in crossing from Calais to Dover, I noticed a vast pile of luggage, unsecured by a single lashing, heaped up on the fore-deck. All was

In this same journey I was amused by an aspect of sea-sickness, or let me say a condition of it, that will be familiar to many who make short passages by water. Going forward of the funnel, where smoking is not prohibited, I took notice of a gentleman wearing an eye-glass. He was clad in a yachting coat, embellished with brass buttons, and he was smoking a large cigar. A very stout Frenchman was asking him some questions in broken English. I heard the gentleman with the eye-glass say that he believed there was a pretty middling sea on outside; but "if you're afraid of being sick, mounseer, you should smoke, sir. You should do as I do. Nothing like tobacco for settling the stomach;" and he gave a horribly confident laugh. The corpulent Frenchman withdrew with a groan, and lodged himself in the gloom under the bridge near the engines, the vibration of which caused his immense body to quiver like a jelly on a supper-table when people are dancing overhead, and there he lay so clamorously ill that the firemen dropped their shovels below to come up and look at him.

Meanwhile I kept my eye on the gentleman who believed in tobacco, and when the steamer took the first of the seas I saw him seize hold of a shroud or a funnel stay and set his legs wide apart. He continued puffing at his cigar for some time but the intervals between removing and lifting it to his mouth grew longer and longer; presently it went out, but he took no notice. He had his glass in his eye and his face looked forward; he was deplorably pale, and I never could have believed that such a trifling thing as a brass button and so prosaic an object as a nautically-cut coat could become, on occasion, more cuttingly ironical than anything a man's friend could say of him. The eye-glass gave this gentle-

man an unusually glaring expression ; he never shifted his gaze—I should say that he never winked. There he stood with his legs wide apart, the extinguished cigar in one hand and the other supporting him with a death-grip, staring with horrible intensity at nothing. I knew perfectly well that if that man were made to shift his posture or speak he would rush to the rail.

It was a brave fight ; but it could not last. A young coloured gentleman, the ashiness of nausea visible in his dark skin, suddenly jumped up from under the pile of luggage, where he had been screening himself from the wind, and, bolting to the side, expended himself in a howl full of the deep throaty noise that is peculiar to negroes. It was irresistible ; the man with the eye-glass let go, and staggered away, with his cigar gone and his hands extended. I feared that he would find no room, for the bulwark was lined with sufferers ; but, with the selfishness of acute suffering, he plumped with all his might between a couple of Frenchmen, squeezed the aperture between them open with his elbows, and fixed himself there ; and there he remained until the water grew smooth near the English cliffs, and the steamer went forward on a steady keel.

It is difficult to understand why people should find anything diverting in sea-sickness, than which surely nothing can cause more suffering. Of course, if a man will give himself airs ashore or on smooth water, use nautical words, and deride the misgivings others are honest enough to confess to, then, indeed, if we find that maine gentleman with his head in a basin, or with his face over the side and his hat gone, we have some excuse to laugh at him. There are people who never will own that they are sick at sea, just as there are people who deny with indignation that they snore in

their sleep. Such folks deserve our ridicule. For what is there to be ashamed of? I have known old sea-captains quit ships newly arrived from around the world and be ill on a voyage from London Bridge to Hull. If such men can shout for the steward without blushing, it is hard to know why Jones, of the Middle Temple, or Smith, of the Stock Exchange, or Snooks, the celebrated novelist, should sneak to the side and feel humbled if his fellow-sufferers see him blue in the face with his pocket-handkerchief half-way down his throat. It may be that people laugh at sea-sick sufferers because of the enormously and by consequence absurdly levelling character of the malady. One might be the most compassionate creature living and yet find it impossible to stop laughing at the debasement of the high and mighty personage who, when he came aboard, people whispered was the Right Honourable So-and-so, or the acute and famous Mr. Justice Somebody Else. He sits aloof, he is full of dignity, he scarcely raises even a condescending eye from the book or paper in his hand to glance at the other passengers, who sit doggedly, if humbly, waiting for the wheels to go round, inside and outside. I say that a man must be more than human if he can help laughing when the high and mighty personage changes colour, when he puts his paper down and rolls his eyes about, when nothing seems to keep his head on but his shirt-collar, and when an invincible horror of life gleams in that gaze which has grown hollow with surprising rapidity. Alas! no amount of reputation, no social importance, no eloquence, which in other places might affect the heart and even improve the understanding, can save him. Yonder in the bows is a poor little cockney, a second-class passenger, in a shabby coat and his trousers half-way up his legs, sick

beyond the power of description ; there is no bench long enough on that vessel to furnish room for him and the great man at once if the water were smooth ; but Nausea has waved her wand, and the humble little cockney and the high and mighty personage are brothers and equals, fellow-sufferers, with all distinctions vanished between them as, with yellow faces, the cockney forward, the great man aft, they overhang the rushing foam with open mouths, the tears pouring from their eyes, and anguish inimitably expressed in the curve of their backs and the occasional kick-up delivered by their legs.

More pathetic, perhaps, is the newly-married couple, though many a cruel laugh and jeer have been directed even at them. But nothing is sacred at sea. Sentiment that is full of poetry in drawing-rooms, among flowers, under the moonshine, among hedges, takes another character among rough waters.

I remember once crossing fifty miles of sea in company with a young gentleman and his bride. They were returning, I took it, from their honeymoon. They sat together upon a small, uncomfortable bench fixed against the inside of the paddle-box, whence they commanded a fine view of the action of the engines, and where the smell of the oil-cans hung steadily in the wind. They both knew they were going to be sick, and sat with hands locked, two devoted hearts bent on suffering together. The steward—a pale, large, sandy-haired man—considerately anticipated their wants by placing a couple of basins at their feet. The dismal implements made but a melancholy foreground for the impassioned pair, and I wondered how they would like to have had their photographs taken in that posture. A quarter of an hour sufficed to make the picture tragical. The wife leaned across the husband and the husband held on to her,

His heroic devotion was immense ; I could hear him in guttural accents pouring consolation into her deaf ears amid the intervals of his own convulsions, and when an unusually heavy roll to leeward caused both basins to slide away out of sight under the bench, I never beheld anything more touching than his struggles to replace them without letting go of his wife.

Happily, however, the heart is occasionally steeled against such objects of misery as this by spectacles of selfishness and fear in the last degree contemptible. I particularly recall a gaunt Frenchman with a spiked moustache, who, long before nausea afflicted him, refused to stir from his seat to help his miserable, prostrate wife, and who answered her murmurs to Emile to put something under her head and something over her feet, by fierce commands to her to hold her tongue. This wretched man was himself seized with nausea, and so great was his fear—either excited by the somewhat heavy sea that washed alongside the vessel or by his sufferings, which to judge from the noise he made, must have led him to suppose that, bit by bit, the whole of him was going overboard—that after every explosion I could hear him shrieking, “Maman ! maman !” like a girl.

What is the remedy for sea-sickness ? I wish I knew—most cheerfully would I impart the secret. There are many prescriptions, from the ice of Dr. Chapman to Jack’s lump of fat pork attached to a ropeyarn ; but nothing seems to answer the end designed. Nor is it very remarkable that the wonderful vessels which were to put an end to nausea should still leave the “expecta-room,” even on their own decks, the useful piece of furniture passengers have for generations found it ; for whilst clever gentlemen have shown us how the effect of the rolling and pitching movement of a ship upon the head

or stomach may be overcome by pivoted saloons and swinging accommodations, they have entirely failed to produce any kind of mechanism to obviate the consequences of those movements of a vessel in a seaway which are alone responsible for sickness; I mean the heave up and the swoop down. If a ship oscillated on an immutable basis, a cot or a balanced chair would effectually stop nausea; like a wineglass on a swinging tray, the passenger could always maintain a posture perpendicular with the horizon. But what is to qualify the sensations which follow the swoop down into the hollows and the roaring heave up on to the summits of the seas? Everything in the ship must accompany her in her falls and in her risings; and it is this motion which sends people rushing to the side, which sets them roaring for the steward, which causes them to loathe life and to lie with their heads anywhere and their feet anyhow.

I cannot help thinking, however that imagination contributes something, and often a very great deal, to seasickness; otherwise how are we to account for people suffering from nausea actually before they step on board the vessel that is to carry them? If a sea-sick man could be sent to sleep his sufferings would cease; yet the vessel goes on rolling, and if it is this movement, affecting the stomach, that causes nausea, I cannot quite see why the stomach should not be as sympathetic in sleep as in waking. Any way, I believe that a person could be made to forget to be sea-sick by having his imagination intensely occupied or his fears excited. Let a vessel full of sea-sick people drive ashore, or catch fire, or be in collision; let the captain bawl out, "We are all lost;". it would be interesting to conjecture how much sickness would remain aboard that ship. A good prescription might be

a profoundly exciting novel: some hideous mystery so distractingly complicate as to make one sink all thoughts of waves and stewards in the eagerness to discover whether the figure Sir Jasper sees was really a ghost or his first wife, and whether it was her ladyship or the groom she ran away with who shot Signor Squallini in the throat and did the fine arts a real service. But it is better to be sea-sick than in danger; and, if the novelists can do nothing for us, I am afraid there is no alternative but to go on feeling the stewards and building swift vessels.



## A LOG EXTRACT.

THE following entry was made in the official log-book of a ship named the *Oxford*:—"Fifth November, 1882, Sunday, 4.0 p m., lat.  $35^{\circ} 39'$  S., long.  $18^{\circ} 53'$  E., W. Waters, A B., while furling the mizzen-topsail fell from the yard into the sea, striking the half round of the poop in his fall. A lifebuoy was promptly thrown him, the ship brought to the wind—it blowing a fresh gale from the S.W., with thick weather and a heavy sea at the time. The port lifeboat was at once lowered, and proceeded under the charge of Mr. A. Bowling, second mate, to pick up the man. Owing, however, to the shock sustained by him in striking the ship, and his being encumbered with oilskins, etc., he sank before the boat could reach him. After an unsuccessful search, the boat returned to the ship and was with difficulty hoisted up, owing to the heavy sea which half filled her. Everything was done that could be done to save the poor fellow. (Signed) J. BRADDICK, Master."

Now, here is the whole story, as who would not suppose? The sailor dropped overboard, a boat unsuccessfully searched for him, and then the ship braced her mainyard round and sailed away. But extracts from log-books, I have taken notice, are like the little box which the fisherman in the "Arabian Nights" found

upon the sea-shore ; when it was opened a wonderful creature shaped itself out, and its figure filled the sky. I particularly realized this when Mr. Bowling gave me a sketch of the yarn of which Captain Braddick's log is the briefest hint. Why, what a world of adventure, of heroism, of peril grows up out of these marine entries ! Is it four lines about a ship rescuing a crew from a sinking vessel ; or about a captain coming across a smack's boat in the middle of the North Sea, with nothing in her but a little crouching, starving boy ; or about a brig found drifting helplessly, with her crew, dead of frost, lying upon her deck ? Assuredly in those four lines there is the making of a thrilling volume to any man who shall faithfully put his hand to the work and, exaggerating nothing, relate merely the adventure as it befell, and how it came about and ended, and what the actors in it said, and did, and thought. Here, in very brief form, is Mr. Bowling's own yarn, told with my pen, of an incident as common pretty nearly in its way at sea as the sight of froth blowing into a hollow, or of the curve of the bow-wave flashing green and glass-smooth from the shearing cutwater.

" We left Calcutta on Sept. 4, 1882, with a full cargo, bound for the port of London. All went well—if by well you'll understand nothing extraordinary outside spells of bothersome head winds, dead calms, and now and again a twister over the quarter to give us legs—until came Sunday, Nov. 5, on which date you'll see by the extract from the log-book where we were ; the glass stood low, and in the morning there was a kind of wild wet light in the sun when he sprang up from behind the dull-coloured sea, and the lustre that came along with him seemed to roll on the top of the swell as if it was burning oil lying there instead of being the up

and down flashing of fair weather, when the light sounds the very bottom of the ocean with its silver lead-line, as you may see for yourselves if you'll watch the break of day under a pure sky and over clean blue water. We were under topgallant-sails, on the starboard tack, the wind about west, with weight enough in it to swear by, and a slow gathering of haze all along the horizon over the port quarter—south-west the bearings would be about—and a thick, deep-breathing swell coming out of it, tumbled by the wind into a bit of a sea that washed with a stormy noise along the bends, and made the ship as uncomfortable as an old cab on a road full of stones.

“I had charge of the deck, and not liking the look of the weather, I went below to tell the captain about it. He had been up pretty near all the night that was gone, and was in his cabin taking some rest. But there's very little rest for shipmasters, who need to have as many eyes as you find in a peacock's tail, that they might close two or three of them at a time, if ever they're to get the amount of sleep that all other kinds of people, barring nautical men, find needful to keep themselves alive on. Well, sir, I called the captain and told him that the weather looked threatening, and straightway he came on deck and took a squint around. The wind was freshening slowly and surely, and the topsails and topgallant-sails, out of whose cloths the wet of last night's squalls of rain were not yet dried, were stretching as if they would burst under it; and the water to leeward washed like boiling milk all along the scuppers as the ship was rushed by the pressure, taking the seas with a floating jump, and making them roar as she split them with her sharp stem and sent them seething in white smothers on either hand. There were clouds crawling up out of the thickness in the west and south,

and passing like smoke over the mastheads, and there was a look of racing about the whole ocean with the sailing of those bits of vapour, and the pelting of the ship, and the wild hurrying rolling of the seas, along which there were sea-birds screeching as they skimmed in their low flight through the driving spray in pursuit of us.

“Well, sir, the fore topgallant-sail was furled and the watch lay aft to roll up the mainsail; but not for long did we hold on with the main topgallant-sail; that was clewed up soon, and the wind freshened as sail was diminished; so that, although half stripped of canvas, the ship was heeling to it as before, whilst there was the hard look of a gale of wind in the sky that you saw grey between the scud; and the thickness was blowing up nearer and nearer, making a mere biscuit’s-throw of the horizon, so that the seas looked lumping things as they rolled, all of a sudden like, out of the haze, and were under the ship and standing up on either hand of her almost as fast as they seemed to be formed. We were now under topsails and foresail only—of the square canvas—when on a sudden there comes a bit of a lull, and a sort of silence aloft that sounded strange after the roaring, and a great noise of washing waters all around; and then plump sweeps up the wind in a wild out-fly out of the south-west, driving the ship forwards until the foam of the cutwater looked to be smothering her head. All hands were called to shorten sail, the three upper topsail halliards were let go, the starboard braces rounded in, and the helm shifted to bring the ship to her course. Four able seamen and four boys went aloft to furl the upper mizzen-topsail. You know the old story: the light hands well out, the older hands in the slings and quarters, and the sail swelling up like a

sheet of iron to the wind that blew fair into it in a storm betwixt the two yards. I had my eye on those men I am speaking of, when a blast like a squall swept the canvas out of their fists, and in a breath one of them fell with a twirl and a toss of his clenched hands off the yard, striking the half-round of the poop a blow that came along with the yell of the wind in a frightful thud; and with that, rebounding as a ball might, over he goes into the yeast and froth alongside. It is a horrible thing to happen; it will stop the breathing of the strongest for a minute. The fellows on the yard roared out, 'Man overboard!' I sprang aft, and had a life-buoy in my hand in an instant, which I threw fair, as I prayed and believed, to the yellow patch of sou'wester that I saw dark on the foam of the side of a sea; but the wind blew the light thing, like a feather, to leeward of him. But he was swimming—there was life in him, though, man, you should have heard the thump of his fall, and then thought of him struggling there with his great sea-boots full of water, and his heavy oilskins dragging him down, and a rushing of froth over his head every time that a sea swept him up into the snow of its breaking crest. Well, sir, we went to work smartly; the hands came tumbling down from aloft, and the ship was brought to with her main-topsail aback, whilst half a dozen of us were obeying with mad haste the order to clear away the quarter-boat ready for lowering.

"Meanwhile a hand remained in the mizzen-topsail yard to keep the poor fellow in sight, and he was shouting that the man was swimming, and swimming strong; that he didn't seem to see the life-buoy, but that he was struggling bravely; and I, seeing this too, and driven half mad by the pitiful sight of that sailor

and shipmate fighting the whole ocean, as I may put it, and battling it with an English seaman's courage, sang out, 'Who's going to volunteer for the boat?' There was no hanging back; it was just a leap to see who should be first. As fast as they could tumble in, there they were, six of them, the pick of the crew—merchant seamen, sir, whom we're being taught to despise; there they were, I say, with the others handling the falls, and every one looking as if the saving of the life of the man astern was his business and nobody's else; for he was a shipmate, and that means a brother at sea, sir, when the forecastle holds real sailors.

"It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and the mist was driving between the masts. I was in charge of the boat, but try my dead best I could not help her being badly stove before we got away, and the water came in fast as we headed for the spot where the man was last seen. You must go through it to realize the difference between the deck of a ship pitching and rolling, no matter how heavily, and the feel of an open boat released from her side in the same sea. The solid deck you're fresh from makes the contrast fearfully sharp, and I can well believe what I remember reading in your yarn of the wreck of the *Indian Chief*, that the survivors of her crew when in the lifeboat owned to being more frightened by the fearful tossing and jumping of the buoyant craft than they were when in their foretop, with the hull of the ship going to pieces under them. We could only pull four oars, for two men had all their work in baling the boat, one with a son'wester and the other with a sea-boot, those being our balers. My duty lay at the helm, in watching for the man and looking out for the seas. Bitterly cold it was, the sun going down, the haze thick around, and

dropped along the port side of her, the water in the boat was up to the thwarts, we showed scarce more than our gunwale, it was almost dark, the sea had increased in volume, and the wind was blowing half a hurricane. We were fairly exhausted when we gained the deck, but humbly grateful as we were for the preservation of our lives, ne'er a one of us could cast a look over the quarter in the place where our shipmate had gone down, and where the darkness of the evening now lay, with the white foam showing with startling clearness upon the sides of those black rushing hills, without feeling that our thankfulness would have been deeper had we been allowed to rescue the man whom we had been very near to losing our lives to save."

## IN AN OPEN BOAT.

LONELINESS has many forms. It is Selkirk, imprisoned in an island, with nothing but the wash of the surf to break the shocking stillness ; it is the mountain-climber missing his way, and passing the long night amid the tremendous silence of towering hills and black valleys ; or it is the loneliness described by Byron, that of a man solitary in crowds. But what sense of solitude can equal that felt by shipwrecked men in a small open boat, surrounded by a universe of waters, with no other chance for their lives than such as a passing ship may bring ? It is not the first hour, nor yet the first day ; the agony of such a trial lies in the slow maddening of the mind by fruitless expectation ; the deception of the white shoulders of clouds, which look like ships as they seem to linger a moment upon the horizon before sailing above it ; the straining of the aching sight against the pitiless, vacant sea-line ; the sense that death is close at hand, though a hundred deaths may have been suffered before the skeleton's clutch is upon the sufferers.

No kind of human anguish is more terrible, and no stories catch a tighter hold of the imagination than those which relate it. Generations have shuddered, and generations will yet shudder over the grand and soul-moving description in "*Don Juan*," The raft of the *Medusa* is



an immortal horror. The narratives which are at once the most fascinating and depressing in the marine records are always those which concern the sufferings of human beings adrift in an open boat in the midst of a great ocean. The deep is unchanging in the misery it works. Our ships are of iron; they are propelled through the calm sea by an irresistible power faster than a gale of wind would drive them; they are of proportions so colossal that many of them could sling the "tall schippes" of our forefathers over their sides, and stow them on skids as they stow their boats; and yet just the same sort of sufferings are endured now by mariners as were experienced by them in the days when a vessel of thirty tons was reckoned big enough not only to seek the North-West Passage but to hunt the unnavigated oceans after continents.

I heard once a story that seemed fitter for the lips of an ancient mariner, like Coleridge's, than the mouth of a seaman who lives in an age in which the Atlantic is crossed in eight days, and in which the Cape of Good Hope has been pretty nearly extinguished by a narrow water-way across a hundred miles of sand. The hearing it took me back in imagination to the days of the ship *Thomas* of Liverpool, the *Lady Hobart* packet, the Yankee ship *Peggy*, the French East India Company's *Prince*, and I know not how many more old craft which ages since became phantom vessels, to be wrecked again and again upon the dark and noiseless oceans of tradition.

"My name," began my informant, "is William Pearce. I have used the sea for above eight and twenty year, have sailed in all kinds of ships in all sorts of capacities—boy, ordinary seamen, sailmaker, bo'sun's mate; crossed the Atlantic seventeen times, and been

round the world eight; been shipwrecked thrice; likewise overboard during seven hours of darkness, and picked up at daybreak with my head in a lifebuoy; know pretty nigh the best and the worst of the weather that's to be found at sea; and am, therefore, capable of taking my oath to this, that of all the bad jobs that ever I was in or that ever I heard of any other sailor being in, there's nothing to beat the sufferings us men of the schooner *Richard Warbuck* had to endure when the foundering of that vessel obliged us to take to the boat.

"The schooner sailed from Runcorn with a cargo of coals for Plymouth. She was twenty years old, and a trifle over a hundred tons burden. There were five of a crew, and nothing particular happened until we were abreast of the Bristol Channel, when there blew up a heavy gale of wind from the east'ard. There's no call to describe it; it was of the regular kind, full of wet, and raising a sea a sight too big for a vessel of one hundred tons pretty nigh chock-a-block with coal and with twenty years of hard use in her hull. However, we scraped through the gale and two or three more that followed fast, until one morning we were somewhere betwixt the Scilly Isles and the Cornish coast. It was dark, thick weather, blowing and raining hard, the sea rough, bitter cold—as you may calculate it was, the month being January—and everything invisible that was more than half a mile off. The wind was east and north, and we were ratching along under very small canvas, when, being turried in, as it was my watch below, and the land o' Nod close aboard, I was roused up by a loud cry on deck and a tremendous crash. I tumbled up as fast as ever I could pelt, and found the schooner going down and the men getting the only boat we carried overboard. It was no time for questions. You could feel

the vessel settling under your feet, just like standing on soft mud and sinking in it. The seas were washing over the deck, and growing heavier as her bulwarks sank lower. There was nothing but white water to be seen on the starboard bow—no rocks, nothing showing above the froth; but I didn't want any one to tell me that we had run foul of the Seven Stones. There was no time to do more than launch the boat and roll into her. Daly was the last man in, and scarce had he jumped when the schooner plumped clean out of sight, going down like a deep-sea lead, so suddenly that it took my breath away.

“There's no sensation worse than that a man feels when he looks for the ship he's been forced to abandon and finds her vanished under the sea. The ocean never seems so wide as then. The whole world appears to be made of water. Sailors are a class of men little given to talking, and when they come clear of such jobs as this they say next to nothing about it, and so people think that either they're men without the capacity of feeling, or else their sufferings were not equal to what might be supposed. Had people who take these views been in that boat along with us, they'd look sharp in altering their opinions. The suddenness of the disaster—our being one moment safe, and the next tossing on the sea in a small boat, with the schooner gone, nothing saved but what we stood in, not a morsel of food nor a drop of drink of any kind, the wind blowing fit to freeze the eyes out of our heads, every mother's son of us soaked to the skin, and drifting fast away towards the Atlantic—took our senses away for a spell. We sat holding on and staring like daft men. The captain was the first to rally.

“He called out, ‘A bad job; it's a bad job, lads!’ several times, and then said, ‘No use letting her drive too fast. We mustn't let her blow away into the ocean;’

and with that we lashed the two oars to the painter and flung 'em overboard.

"This brought her head to wind and slowed her drift; but, for all that, every hour was carrying us further and further towards the open sea, and away from the Scilly Isles and the Cornish coast, which were our best chance, so that all the hope that was left us was being picked up by a passing vessel. Yet there could be no worse month in the year than January for that likelihood. How long were the gales and the frost going to let us last? We were far to the nor'ard of the fairway, in a part of the sea that every vessel was bound to give a wide berth to. The weather, as I have said, was so thick that you couldn't see half a mile off, and though of course it was sure to clear in time and open out the horizon, so that vessels could have a view around them, the question was where should we be when it came on fine?

"Unlike a good many others who have gone through such dreadful messes as this, our sufferings began the moment we tumbled into the boat. In the lowest latitudes that ever I was in I never felt such cold. Had the water been fresh our clothes would have froze into coverings of ice. The air was full of spray, and squalls of sleet came rolling up. We sat in the bottom of the boat in a lump, to keep her steady, and for the shelter of one another's bodies, and those who were to windward—that is, in the fore part—would shift from time to time, and others take their place. We had no mast nor sail, nothing but the two oars we rode to. It was a Monday, and all through the daylight we sat lifting our eyes above the gunwales, and trying to pierce the haze for a vessel. It was blowing about half a gale of wind, and it kept steady. Now and then we'd ship a dose of

water, and bale it out with our caps; but it kept our feet soaking, and I reckon it was worse than being without boots at all. The boat did well, and the oars were a kind of breakwater, and helped her. After four in the afternoon the night drew on. We never could get used to the darkness. The daytime was bad enough, but the night made our sufferings maddening. The wind, when the sea was black, would take the feel of solid ice; we couldn't see one another, and that made talking a kind of foolishness, and so we never spoke, which caused every one to feel himself a lonely man upon the sea. Likewise the noise of the water would sound stronger. In the daytime I took no notice, but at night I'd find myself listening to the crying of the wind up in the dark, and the hissing that rose all over the ocean from the breaking of the waves.

"I don't know what my mates did; but that first night I never closed my eyes, never tried to shut them, never thought of sleep. I saw the dawn come, but the haze was too thick to let the light show on the horizon; it was overhead as well as around, when the morning broke; there was no darkness that you'll find hanging in the west at daybreak. Indeed, I believe the sun was up above the sea before any light came, so thick it was. All the men were awake, and dreadful they looked, as of course I did. One of them was named Burke. I noticed him at once, and thought he was dying. He lay athwartships with his back against the starboard side of the boat, and there was a strange working in his fingers, like the movement of a woman's hands opening a skein of thread.

"The captain said, 'For God's sake look around, lads, and see if there's anything in sight.'

"The sea ran high, and made it dangerous for any

of us to stand up, for fear of capsizing the boat ; so we hung over the gunwale with our chins on a level with it, and stared into the driving smother with all our might : but there was nothing to be seen but the breaking seas, when we were hove up, and the water standing like walls on either hand when we dropped into the troughs. All at once Burke sat up and began to sing out for a drink of water. He talked as if he believed we had it and wouldn't give it, which was the first sign of his insanity. The captain tried to pacify him, speaking very kindly, and seeking to cheer him.

" ' We have outlived a day and a night,' said he. ' Keep up your heart, mate ; we may have a thousand-ton ship under us before it comes dark again.' "

" But Burke kept on crying for water, saying that he was dying for it, and pointing to his throat ; and then, falling on all fours, he puts his face to the salt water washing about in the bottom of the boat and sucked up several mouthfuls. Well, it seemed to do him no hurt, and he lay quiet. Soon after this I spied something knocking about in the sea a few fathoms astern, and called the skipper's attention to it. He said it was one of some kegs of butter that had been aboard the schooner, so we pulled the oars in and dropped down to it and picked it up. We broke it open and ate the butter in fistfuls, being mad with hunger ; but it was as salt as brine, and the effect of it was to make our thirst raging. The knife we had used to open the keg lay in the bottom of the boat, and Burke, on a sudden turning over, seized hold of it, jumped up, and fell upon the captain. He hit him once, but the knife didn't pierce through the thick jacket the skipper had on, and, before he could raise his hand again, we dragged him down and kneeled upon him.

“There was no worse part in all that dreadful time than this. The madman’s face was a terrible sight; almost black it was. He snapped about him with his teeth, and his cries and curses were things it brings the sweat upon my face to talk about. Think of our situation, mad with thirst ourselves and struggling with a madman, a killing north-easter blowing like knives through our frozen bodies, the sea leaping and roaring around us, and nothing between us and the bottom but the little old boat we were in. We were too weak, and in too much suffering ourselves, to remain holding the madman down, and finding him quiet we let go, and squatted one close to another for warmth; but scarcely had we hauled off from the poor wretch when he jumps up and throws himself overboard. ‘Mind!’ shouted the skipper, ‘one’s enough!’ fearing that if we all got to the side Burke had leaped from we should upset the boat. I was the nearest, and as he came up close I leaned over, and got him by the hair, and dragged him into the boat. He was pretty nigh dead, and gave us no more trouble.

“Well, sir, the night came down a second time, finding us living, but without the looks of live men. I made sure I should never see another daybreak. My thirst was not so sharp as it had been; but I don’t know whether the dull throbbing in my throat, the kind of lockjaw feeling in my mouth, the burning in my tongue as though it were a lump of hot iron, was not more torturing than when the craving was fiercer. All night long it blew a strong wind, with now and then a squall of sleet and rain, and hour after hour two of the men, Parsons and Daly, were groaning in the bottom of the boat. When the light came, I looked to see who was alive, and my eyes falling on Burke, I called out, ‘Dead!’ The captain leaned down and felt him, and

said, 'Yes, he's gone. He's the first. God have mercy upon us!' and catching hold of my shoulder he stood up to search the sea, but the haze was as thick as it had been all the time, and he threw himself down with his hands over his face. Presently, looking at the body, he said, 'We must bury him; but first, my lads, let us say a prayer for him and for ourselves.' We all knelt while the captain prayed, and when he had done we lifted the body and let it go overboard.

"The madness that thirst creates broke out strong in Daly and Parsons when the body was gone, and down they dropped as Burke had, and lapped up the salt water in the bottom of the boat like dogs would. The captain implored them not to drink, but they never heeded him nor me, who likewise entreated them. However, no harm seemed to come of it. Well, sir, there's no need for me to describe that Wednesday nor our third night in that open boat. Thursday morning came, making the fourth day, and to our joy the weather cleared, the wind shifted and moderated, and the sea went down. We got the oars in, rigged up one as a mast, and two of us having oilskin coats on, we joined them so as to form a sail, made a yard of the other oar, and putting the boat before the wind, which was blowing a light breeze from the south'ard, headed, as the captain judged, for the Irish coast. All the day long we kept a wild lookout, as you may reckon, for any passing ship; but never once, not in the furthest distance, did such an object heave in sight. We might have been sailing in the middle of the Pacific. Nature in us was almost numbed. We had come to such a pass that we were too faint and exhausted to feel the craving of hunger and thirst. At least I can speak for myself, and it's in that way I account for my suffering less at the end than I did at the



beginning of the dreadful time we went through. It was still cold, but nothing like the bitter cold of the gale and the heavy seas and squalls. We reckoned by the sun that the wind hung steady, and we let the boat slip before it; that was all that could be done. If we were to sail at all we were bound to keep the breeze over our stern, seeing there was nothing to draw but a couple of oilskins secured to the oar.

“But the coming on of Thursday night was like the bitterness of death itself, sir. Indeed it was. All day long we had reckoned upon sighting something before the sun went. Every hour we had hoped and prayed and believed would heave up some sort of vessel to come to our rescue; and therefore, when it drew up black, only a few stars among the slow clouds, and we were brought face to face with another long winter’s night, my heart failed me altogether; I felt that there was a curse upon us, and that we were doomed men, singled out to die of famine, the most cruel of deaths, because the longest. Think of ninety-six hours in an open boat, in January, in the Chops, a north-east gale blowing most of the time, with never a morsel of food except the salt butter, and no drink but the salt water washing in the boat! And yet when the Friday morning came we were still alive, the captain steering, doubled up with faintness and the cold, his knees against his mouth, and his head lolling for want of strength in his neck; Daly and Parsons lying still as dead men under the thwarts, and me in the bows, too weak and broken-hearted even to cast my eyes around the sea to notice if there was a vessel in sight.

“The morning passed; the afternoon passed. Were we to go through another night? The sun was within half of an hour of his setting when Parsons, who was leaning his breast on the gunwale, stood upright and

pointed. His mouth was full of froth, and as he tried to speak the foam flew out of his lips, but no words he spoke; it was naught but a kind of death-rattle in his throat. We all looked in the direction he pointed to, and saw a large sailing-vessel heading right down for us. How we watched her! all of us standing up, never speaking, and only moving with the roll and toss of the boat. It took her an hour to approach us, and then she hove us a line; but her people had to sling us aboard. None of us could move. Nothing but the excitement of seeing her had allowed us to stand. The moment the line was in the boat and we were alongside, we all became as helpless as babies.

“The vessel's name, sir? She was the Austrian barque *Grad Karlovak*, commanded by so humane a man that I feel fit to cry when I think of him and his kindness to us poor miserable shipwrecked English sailors. That's the story, sir, or as much of it as there is any call to relate. Five days and four nights in the month of January, in an open boat, most of the time blowing heavily! The tale's known at Plymouth—it's known at Runcorn—it's known to Mr. Hopkins, the agent of the Shipwrecked Mariner's Society at Plymouth. And I'll tell you somebody else it's known to, sir—some one as'll swear to every word of it; and that's me.”

## WAITING FOR A SHIP.

THE Shipping Office in Tower Hill is a place where seamen, firemen, stokers, and others assemble in the hope that captains in want of crews will come and pick out the best men among them to "sign on," as it is called. I was induced to visit it the other day by hearing a sailor complain bitterly of the filthy state of it. "Neglect," said he, "is our lot; but the condition of that shipping office beats my time. It's all dirt and Dutchmen, and if ye want to see something to make you reflective, just trot down the steps and take a turn round the yard the next time you're passing that way." When finally I did trot down the steps I found myself in a kind of courtyard, flanked on the one hand by the shipping offices—grimy doors, leading into gloomy interiors—and on the other hand by a species of shed, partitioned into stone rooms, with hard and painful seats against the walls, and unwholesome draughts of dampish wind eddying about them. It was a gloomy day—rain had fallen, and pools of muddy water gleamed here and there in the yard; the brown and stooping London sky threatened more wet, and flung a shadow that made the shipping office and its yard and its condemned-cell-like rooms under the shed an unspeakably cheerless, depressing, and miserable picture. Some

sixty or seventy men stood or moved about in groups in the yard, or were seated in the cells under the shed. I was hardly prepared to witness so large an assembly, and remained near the steps for a little while surveying them. A few of them were decently attired—one or two respectably and comfortably dressed in good clothes and clean linen; but a large proportion of them were, so far as their costume went, little better than scarecrows. Some were clad merely in shirt and trousers, with their naked feet thrust into old shoes or boots; here and there was a red or blue shirt, or a figure buttoned up in such a manner as to suggest that under the ragged old coat there was no shirt at all. “And is this,” thought I, “the British sailor of the nineteenth century?—is this the original of those rubicund features, those flowing breeches, that tarpaulin hat on nine hairs, those well-polished shoes twinkling in the light-hearted measures of the hornpipe, which are offered by novelists, dramatists, and theatre lessees as accurate representations of the jolly tar we are so fond of joining in choruses about, and whom we gaze at with such patriotic enthusiasm as he hitches up his breeches, turns his quid, and smites his timbers?” Every crowd of human faces is full of variety, but no crowd that ever I looked at had the variety submitted by the countenances of these sixty or seventy men who were “waiting for a ship.” The negro’s face—flat, bland, and open-mouthed—was, of course, not wanting. Square cheeks, hollow cheeks, high cheeks; complexions black, brown, and yellow; eyes of every pattern and shade—from the small, twinkling blue of the North-country to the filmy and red-webbed optics of the gin-soaked Cockney—combined, with the different build and shapes of the men, the appearance of their clothes, the various head-coverings, to make up

a truly singular scene. I stepped forward and got among a little bunch of men, of whom, addressing myself to one, I asked what sort of shelter that dirty and wretched shed and those bleak and stony cells offered in the winter, when the wind blew with an edge and the sleet and rain fell. No notice had been taken of me before, but on my making this inquiry the eyes of the whole group were fixed upon me, and half a dozen voices answered at once. The meaning of the replies was lost in the confusion, but the noise was like a signal; for I can truly say that within a few seconds of my having asked that question every man in that yard and every man that had been lounging in the cells had gathered about me, so that before I very well knew what was happening I found myself—pretty tightly squeezed—in the centre of a mass of men, the outer portions of whom pressed eagerly upon the inner to hear and see what was going forward. It was like a mutiny on a large scale, and when I looked around at the mass of faces, and tasted the tobacco-laden breath of the near people blowing hot against my cheeks, I felt that nothing was wanted to complete the suggestion of revolt but the gleam of a score of sheath-knives flourished in the air. “Give me a little room, my lads,” said I, working with my elbows; and, having freed myself somewhat, I said, “There seems no lack of men here; captains ought to find no difficulty in manning their ships.”

“They don’t want Englishmen; it’s Dutchmen they take,” shouted two or three voices.

“Here’s a man,” called out some one, pointing into the left of the crowd, “who’s been walking this yard for five months.”

“Five months, as true as the words I use is English,” bawled a hoarse voice. “But they won’t have me because

my name's Johnson. If it was Unks von Dunks I'd ha' been voyaging o'er and o'er again in the time I've been kicking my heels about starving here."

"Scoffen von Romp would do as well," said a man near me. "Don't matter what the name is so long as it sounds Dutch."

"By Dutch I suppose you mean foreigners of all kinds?" said I.

"Ay, they're all Dutchmen!" was the shout.

"But why is it that Dutchmen are preferred to Englishmen?" I asked.

The hubbub raised by this obliged me to hold up my hand and entreat silence; but it would not do. Every man's mind was full of the grievance, and, amid the chorus of replies, I barely succeeded in catching such answers as—"Dutchmen 'll ship for two pound a month!" "Dutchmen 'll eat anything!" "Englishmen won't put up with the messes Dutchmen 'll swallow!" "Skippers can rope's-end Dutchmen, but they durs'n't serve Englishmen so!" "It's the Dutch crimps as does it!" and so forth.

It was difficult to hear these cries and watch the sea of surging heads and faces around me with unmoved gravity. There was something to touch the very dullest capacity of appreciating the ridiculous in the astonishing contrasts of physiognomies, and in the multifarious expressions which adorned the poor fellows' countenances; but I am not sure that the appeal made to my laughter did not owe much of its force to the sorrowful element in it—to a quality of pathos lying close to humour. Many of these faces had a pinched look, that was painfully expressive of want, if not of positive starvation; and sad indeed, it seemed to me, was the sight of it in men who carried the manners of real seamen, and who appeared

to me to be fit for any fore-castle afloat, and for any duty that a sailor is expected to understand.

"I suppose you all come here with certificates of conduct in your pockets?" said I, when the hubbub had ceased.

Instantly a crowd of fists were thrust under my nose, filled with documents, and "Here's mine!" and "Here's mine!" "V. G. every one of 'em!" was roared out in twenty or thirty voices. I looked at some of these certificates, and found the letters "V. G." (very good) endorsed on the backs of all that I examined.

"D'ye want to ship, sir?" sung out a fellow whilst I was glancing over these papers. "I've got two V. G. certificates in my pocket, and as I've not had anything to eat to-day you shall have 'em both for a couple of shillings."

"Are certificates often sold in this fashion?" said I, of a quiet-looking man standing alongside of me.

"Sold!" he exclaimed indignantly; "what's to hinder 'em? If a man sticks to the name that's on the certificate, who's to know? and so ye get men shipping themselves with false characters, no more fit for sailors' work than if they was greengrocers."

"Perhaps that's one reason why skippers and owners prefer Dutchmen to Englishmen," said I. But this raised another storm; they shouted that more rascality went on in that way among Dutchmen than British sailors that the reason was not that, but because, as I had heard, Dutchmen shipped for wages no Englishman would look at, and put up with food, accommodation, and treatment which no Englishman would endure, and likewise because there was a deal of underhand crimping work going on between the foreign boarding-house runners and mates and captains, and so on.

Here the emotions of these sixty or seventy men

brought them pressing so heavily around me, that my anxiety to hear their statements was swamped in the labour of breathing and the struggle to liberate myself. I bawled to them to make way, as I wanted to have a look at the rooms under the shed ; on which they drew back and let me out, though they followed at my heels as I passed from one room to another, talking and arguing hotly, calling marine blessings down on the heads of all Dutchmen, and wondering what good it was nowadays being born an Englishman, when even a Finn, whom, in the olden times, no sailor liked to be shipmates with, was thought a better man ? The rooms were middle-sized, damp, dark, and dirty compartments, and were meant to serve as waiting-rooms for the unhappy creatures who thronged the bleak and frowsy yard in the hope of being engaged by captains. It was like being in the dungeons in the Tower of London—which, by the way, stood close at hand—to pass through these death-cold apartments and view the legends, dictated by hopeless waiting, roughly scrawled in pencil upon the walls. Dirt and soot everywhere !—on the ceilings, on the floors, on the walls, on the benches, in the very atmosphere that filled the cheerless haunt. A strip of grating ran through the floors, disclosing the outline of a hot-water pipe ; but it looked, in that grave, the very corpse of a heating apparatus ; and when I asked if ever these stone rooms were made warm by that old, mouldy, dirt and soot covered contrivance, the only answer I got was a loud growling laugh, as if, exquisite as was the joke, it was likewise very offensive. And this, thought I, as I stood gazing with mingled astonishment and disgust at the picture of grime, neglect, and dirt, is the great London shipping office, the medium for the vast and ever-growing port of London for the transaction